THE WORLD'S EPOCH-MAKERS.
EDITED BY OLIPHANT SMEATON.

Rousseau

By
Professor W. H. HUDSON,

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Rousseau and Naturalism in Life and Thought

By William Henry Hudson

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109

THE WORLD'S EPOCH-MAKERS

Rousseau and Naturalism in Life and Thought

By

William Henry Hudson

Lecturer to the London University Extension Board; late Professor of English Literature, Stanford University, California, and Professorial Lecturer, The University of Chicago

Author of "An Introduction to the Philosophy of Herbert Spencer" "The Life of Sir Walter Scott" etc. etc.

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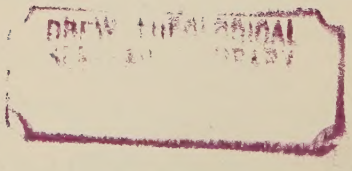

FEB 18 1907

To

My Friend

Dr. Frederick James Furnivall

As a slight token of gratitude
and esteem

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PREFACE

In this brief study of the personality, work, and influence of one of the most remarkable and enigmatical men of the eighteenth century, I have undertaken to write a small book on a vast and very difficult subject. It would be wide of the mark to apologise for my temerity, and the chapters which follow, with all their necessary omissions and limitations, must now be left to speak for themselves. A word or two of explanation may none the less be allowed.

Rousseau's writings cannot properly be judged apart from his life: the one is required to elucidate the other. I have thus been obliged to re-tell, though with the utmost possible succinctness, the strange and tragic story of his career. In the biographical part of my book I have everywhere availed myself, not only of all important contemporary sources of information (and the name of these is legion), but also of the results attained by modern continental specialists, who have made every detail of Rousseau's history the subject of exhaustive investigation. The need of this becomes apparent, when we remember that the whole tendency of recent inquiry is to throw serious discredit upon Rousseau's voluminous autobiographical writings, which were long rated as historical documents far above

their true value. He himself acknowledged that the famous *Confessions*, begun when he was more than fifty, were produced in large part from memory; that he did not hesitate to fill in from imagination the frequent gaps left in his recollections; and that he described things he had forgotten as it seemed to him they ought to have been. It is quite clear that his habit of regarding all the incidents of his singularly eventful life emotionally, often led him to give them a wholly factitious significance; that he unconsciously coloured early experiences with the ideas and prejudices of later days; and that, worse than this, he was in many places guilty of the deliberate manipulation of his material with an eye to literary and dramatic effect. Thus his great claim for absolute unique fidelity of self-portraiture—*intus et in cute*, in the words of his motto from Persius—has to be set aside. His work is a combination of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, with a great deal more of the *Dichtung* than the ordinary student is apt to suppose. One of his French biographers has not scrupled to speak of the *Confessions* as "un roman plus ou moins historique" (Beaudouin, *Vie et œuvres de Rousseau*, i. 160). This may be an exaggeration. But the need of weighing every statement and checking every particular in them cannot be neglected. I have striven to make my own sketch accurate so far as it goes. It would be pedantic to tabulate here all the books, essays, and articles to which I have had recourse. The more important of them will be found mentioned in the footnotes, in which I have also tried to acknowledge, in every case, my direct indebtedness to other writers upon Rousseau and his times.

A more serious difficulty in dealing with Rousseau than that presented by the multifarious and often-conflicting materials to be considered, inheres in the character of the man himself, and the nature of many of his confidences. "What a charming frankness runs through the *Confessions!*" wrote Samuel Rogers once to his friend Sharpe. Of the frankness there can be no question, though whether it is always charming will be a matter of individual taste. Rousseau has gained, as everybody knows, an unenviable kind of notoriety from his morbid habit of tearing aside the veil which men habitually keep drawn across their evil motives and actions, and of indulging in reminiscences and revelations which outrage all common feelings of decency and reserve. His autobiography is full of things which, in Pliny's phrase, must be introduced with an apology, even if they are touched upon at all. Now, to leave such matters out of our account altogether is necessarily to give an incomplete, and therefore false, idea of Rousseau's character; to treat of them even briefly, is to run the risk of giving offence. More than once, I will admit that, face to face with the problem of what to include and what to avoid, I have felt the full force of a remark which the late Mr. Grant Allen once made to me—that it is impossible to give an absolutely accurate picture of Rousseau in any book written in English for popular perusal. I feel that it is only fair to myself to call attention to this difficulty. My own policy has been to err more on the side of reticence than of outspokenness, and to imply rather than to particularise.

In the second part of my book I have tried to give a broad outline of Rousseau's philosophy, and to indi-

cate the nature and direction of his enormous influence. Here the demands of space, and the need of brevity and condensation, have compelled me to confine myself strictly to the business of exegesis, to leave out of view entirely many interesting minor matters, and especially to avoid any consideration of the thousand and one questions which start up on every side. It must be understood, therefore, that what I here offer is simply an interpretation of Rousseau's cardinal doctrines, and not in any sense a discussion of their permanent value. I must be satisfied if I have succeeded in giving a clear general idea both of what Rousseau taught, and of the relation of his teaching to some of the great movements of his own age and the revolutionary period at large.

WILLIAM HENRY HUDSON.

London, June 1903.

CONTENTS

PART I

The Man

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	EARLY LIFE (1712–1731)	1
II.	ROUSSEAU AND MADAME DE WARENS (1731–1741)	20
III.	PARIS, VENICE, AND PARIS AGAIN (1741–1756)	39
IV.	THE HERMITAGE AND MONT-LOUIS (1756–1762)	64
V.	PERSECUTIONS AND WANDERINGS — LAST YEARS AND DEATH (1762–1778)	88

PART II

Work and Influence

VI.	ROUSSEAU'S ATTACK UPON ART AND SCIENCE	116
VII.	POLITICAL WRITINGS	133
VIII.	"LA NOUVELLE HÉLOÏSE"	153
IX.	"ÉMILE"	180
X.	RELIGIOUS WRITINGS	207
XI.	ROUSSEAU AS EPOCH-MAKER	226
	INDEX	253

ROUSSEAU

PART I.—THE MAN

CHAPTER I

Early Life (1712–1731)

Jean Jacques Rousseau, the younger by some seven years of the two sons of Isaac Rousseau and Suzanne (*née* Bernard) his wife, was born in Geneva on the 28th June 1712. He belonged on his father's side to a Parisian family which had fled from the French metropolis during the wars of religion in the middle of the sixteenth century, and had settled in Geneva, where its blood had since been mingled freely with that of the Swiss Protestant *bourgeoisie*. His birth, which in a well-known phrase he described as the first of his misfortunes, was followed within a few days by his mother's death, and the sickly infant was kept alive only by the care of a paternal aunt (afterwards Madame Gonceru), whose devotion he tenderly remembered in the gloom of his closing years.

Suzanne Rousseau, the nicce (not, as Jean Jacques says, the daughter[1]) of a Protestant pastor, was a woman of attractive appearance and rather coquettish manners, and though nothing more than girlish thoughtlessness can be proved against her, her conduct on one occasion had called down reproof from the Consistory of the austere city. She disappears at once from the record of her famous son, and it would be too hazardous an excursion into the mysteries of heredity to speculate as to the extent to which, if at all, he may have been indebted to her for any of his own well-marked peculiarities. The influence of his father, on the other hand, it would be impossible to overlook, and not easy to exaggerate. He regarded him always with respect bordering on veneration; praised him for his probity and honour;[2] described him as a "virtuous citizen" and the "best of fathers";[3] and, while admitting his devotion to pleasure, presented him as a model of rectitude and wisdom. Here, however, allowance must be made for filial infatuation. The elder Rousseau was, in reality, a man of restless disposition, utterly careless of duty, irritable and quarrelsome, with lofty sentiments and a facile flow of feeling, but no depth or stability of character. A clever workman at his family trade of watchmaker, he might in course of time, with economy and patience, have placed himself in a position of financial independence. But economy and patience were not in his composition. His capricious nature led him more

[1] It will not be necessary to call attention to the various errors of detail in Rousseau's own narrative. The necessary corrections will be made as a matter of course.

[2] *Confessions*, livre i.

[3] Dedication of *Discours sur l'Inégalité*.

than once to abandon his proper calling for that of dancing master; and even during his more settled years he spent money as fast as he made it, or even rather faster, for he seems to have allowed his wife's little fortune to run gradually through his fingers. Of the common obligations of family relationships he had not the slightest conception. He shamefully neglected his elder child; to his younger and more favoured, his foolish kindness proved equally cruel. He suffered terribly, Jean Jacques insists, from the loss of his wife, to whom, in his high-strung lachrymose fashion, he was wont to consecrate his easy sighs and tears. But he afterwards consoled himself by marrying again. Rousseau says that of all the gifts vouchsafed by heaven to the authors of his being, a "sensitive heart" was the only one they transmitted to him. But the student of his life and writings will doubt the accuracy of the statement, on noting the countless points at which the great sentimentalist showed himself his father's son.[1]

"If ever child received a reasonable and sound education, it was I." Such is the judgment of the author of *Émile* upon his own early training; and his notion of what constitutes reasonableness and soundness may be inferred from the details by which this amazing statement is supported. He was never at school; knew nothing of the natural discipline afforded by the friendships and rivalries of class-room and playground; and, having no associates of his own age, grew up

[1] His personal resemblance to his father must have been striking. One of Isaac's friends at Nyon, on seeing Jean Jacques for the first time, in 1754, wrote to a correspondent: "Je le reconnus sur-le-champ à l'air de feu son pere" (Ritter, *La famille et la jeunesse de Rousseau*, p. 195).

mainly in the society of adults, with his aunt and father for his principal companions. During the first ten years of his life—the years when the twig is bent as the tree is afterwards to be inclined—it was no one's special concern to take him seriously in hand, correct his faults, eradicate his evil tendencies, develop and strengthen the better sides of his character. Aunt Rousseau was a kindly, pleasant soul, whose old-fashioned ways and quaint charm of manner left a profound impression upon him, and who certainly counted for much in his life, if he is correct in saying that from her he derived his taste, or rather passion, for music, which was not, however, to manifest itself till many years later. The long hours he passed with her, watching her knit and listening to her sing, might indeed have been worse employed; and we are grateful for the beautiful passage in which, with his peculiar magic of style, Rousseau has painted for us this tender picture from the past.[1] But the good woman had neither strength nor insight to deal with so complex and dangerous a nature as that of the child so much left to her charge. She weakly allowed him to do what he liked, and made no effort to break his habits of gluttony, lying, and petty theft. Such habits, he remarks, are incident to childhood — they are spontaneous expressions, we must suppose, of that "natural goodness" of the human heart of which presently we shall hear so much. But however that may be, it is commonly held a chief part of education, or the "art of fashioning men,"[2] to overcome such "natural" impulses. And, under his aunt's care, the precocious boy learned nothing of restraint, obedience, self-denial, but

[1] *Confessions*, livre i. [2] Preface to *Émile*.

rather conceived against all rule that deep aversion which was to mark him through life.

But while the aunt's influence over the child was for the most part negative for both good and evil, that of Isaac Rousseau was wholly and positively bad. That "best of fathers" undoubtedly gave a bias to the mind and character of his younger son which had much to do with the follies and miseries of later years. How he picked up the alphabet, Jean Jacques could not remember; but he never forgot his first readings, and their effect upon him. In the little library his mother had left behind her were a number of romances, not specified, but presumably the then famous productions of Honoré d'Urfé, La Calpranède, and Mdlle. de Scudéri. These the father and son—the latter being then, according to his recollection, some five or six years old—set themselves to devour, evening by evening, after supper. At first the purpose was that merely of giving the child practice in reading; but presently the interest became so keen that the strange pair would continue, turn and turn about, far into the night, never leaving off till they had reached the end of a volume. Then, sometimes, hearing the morning song of the swallows, Isaac would exclaim: "Come! to bed! I am the greater child of the two." Even Jean Jacques is forced to admit that this was a "dangerous" course of instruction. It gave him, he says, great facility in reading and comprehension; but, along with this, a knowledge of the passions unique (and certainly anything but desirable) at so early an age. The senses were already stimulated, the imagination was already aflame, before the intelligence was strong enough to take control; and bizarre and

romantic notions of life were implanted, which neither the experience nor the reflection of after years was able wholly to correct.[1]

However, the stock of romances was presently exhausted, and father and son then turned for more solid nutriment to history and biography, from which the boy would read aloud while the watchmaker was busy at his bench. Various volumes were thus laid under contribution; but the deepest and most lasting impression was made by Plutarch's *Lives*—an impression intensified by the comments of the father, in whom love of country and ardent republicanism were master-passions. "From these interesting readings," writes Jean Jacques, "and from the conversations to which they gave rise between my father and myself, were formed that free republican spirit, and proud, indomitable character, impatient of yoke and servitude, which have tormented me all my life, in situations least favourable to give them scope." The child's imagination caught fire as he read; he fancied himself now this and now that antique hero; one day the dramatic excitement carried him so far that, recounting at table the story of Scævola, he thrust his hand into the chafing dish to illustrate the young Roman's action. Yet great as is the stress he wishes us to lay upon this boyish enthusiasm for Plutarch, we cannot really give it a large place among the formative influences of his life. It generated (as he himself admits of his "reasonable and sound" education as a whole) "sentiments élevés

[1] "At eight," says Rousseau, "I had read all the romances; they had caused me to weep buckets of tears . . . Hence that heroic and romanesque taste which has only continued to grow to the present time, and which ended by disgusting me with everything, except what resembled my own absurdities [*folies*]" (*Quatre Lettres à Malesherbes*).

mais imaginaires." It pleased him to discourse with seductive eloquence of antique virtue, calm dignity, strength of character. But no one was ever built upon a model less like that of the Roman stoic than the restless, flighty, unpoised Jean Jacques.

When he was ten, the first important change came into his life. His father, on one of his hunting expeditions, got into a disgraceful quarrel with an ex-captain of the Polish guards, and, on being sentenced by the city council to fine and imprisonment for infraction of the peace and non-appearance before them, fled the Republic and established himself at Nyon, on the borders of Lake Leman, only three miles from Geneva.[1] By this time the elder son, François, having, largely in consequence of paternal neglect and ill-treatment, turned out a hopeless scoundrel, had run away to Germany, never afterwards to be heard of. This had already happily relieved Isaac of some portion of his embarrassing domestic responsibilities. The moment had now come when he could cast aside the rest. Instead of sending for Jean Jacques to his new home, as any save the "best of fathers" would surely have done, he quietly abandoned him to the care of his brother-in-law, Gabriel Bernard. The example thus given him, Jean Jacques in his turn was, as has been said, presently to follow only too faithfully. But lack of any sense of home ties and duties was part of that

[1] The incident is recorded in a garbled form by Jean Jacques, who throws the entire blame upon the "insolent and cowardly" ex-captain. In reality, as is shown by documents (extracts from which are given by Ritter, *op. cit.*, chap. ix.), Isaac Rousseau was the aggressor. The fact that the sentence of the council was pronounced against 'Sieur Rousseau, maître de danse," is evidence that he had again exchanged watchmaking for his other and less sedentary profession.

general spirit of vagabondage which seemed a tradition in the Rousseau family.

Uncle Bernard had a son about Jean Jacques' age, and he sent the two boys together to Bossey, a village near Geneva, where they were placed as boarders in the house of a minister named Lambercier. Here they remained for a couple of years; and under the care of the excellent pastor and his unmarried sister, a certain amount of moral restraint was for the first time introduced into Jean Jacques' life. This was on the whole a happy period. It is true that he was now set to learn, "along with Latin, all the trivial nonsense which accompanies it under the name of education." But much of each day was spent in the cultivation of the garden and other outdoor activities, and it is at this point that Rousseau marks the birth of his passionate love of nature and simple country pursuits. His relations with his cousin meanwhile had not a little of idyllic beauty. That when, speaking of his subsequent parting from this first friend, he could write—"We never corresponded, nor saw one another again. It is a pity. He had an essentially good character, and we were made to love each other"—may only serve to remind us how little depth there was to even his strongest emotions.

The stay at Bossey was brought to a close by an incident which would probably have left no lasting impression on any normal child, but which loomed up in Jean Jacques' memory in the proportions of a tragedy. He was accused of a fault he had not committed, and, despite his denial, was severely punished. "There," he declares, "was the end of the serenity of my childish existence. From that moment I ceased to

enjoy pure happiness, and to-day I feel that the recollection of the charms of my boyhood stops there." The boys remained with the Lamberciers for some months after this catastrophe. But everything that had given meaning and beauty to life had fled; their feelings of confidence and self-respect had been destroyed; their plants and flowers were neglected by them, for even nature had grown morose and gloomy in their eyes. Such, at least, is the substance of Rousseau's own account of the "first injustice" he had ever known, and its results. But we may more than suspect that it is coloured by his later theory of the essential innocence of the human heart and the evil wrought by discipline.

Nor must we be misled by what Rousseau tells us of the "serenity of childhood" thus rudely broken in upon by despotism. His own revelations make it only too clear that lascivious instincts were already powerful in his precocious and combustible nature; that his blood, which had burned "with sensuality almost from his birth," and had been further fired by his readings of romance, had ere this stung him to depraved fancies if not to vicious actions. His long, morbid analysis of the effects produced by an old-fashioned punishment at Mdlle. Lambercier's hands, is proof enough of the constant stirrings of vile impulses in his thoroughly depraved imagination. Rousseau might make much of his childhood by touching its details with the rhetoric of which he was so supreme a master. Serene it certainly was not.

Returning to Geneva, he passed some months (not, as he states, two or three years) with his uncle, enjoying a freedom which he says—though the *Confessions*

hardly bear out the assertion—he did not abuse, and paying occasional visits to his father at Nyon. Meanwhile the question was, what should be made of him? —characteristically enough, he did not seem at all to realise the fact that, in the long run, he would have to make something of himself. He did, however, entertain a passing notion that he would like to be a minister; he would, he says, have enjoyed preaching sermons—especially, we may add, as there is no necessary relationship between preaching and practice. But funds failing for the carrying out of this ambition, he was articled to a notary, by whom he was soon discharged for ignorance and stupidity. He was then apprenticed for five years to one Abel Ducommun, an engraver. The terms of the contract[1] included, on the master's side, not only professional training, but also instruction "in the fear of God, and good manners." This part of his duty Ducommun, a man of boorish habits and violent temper, was ill fitted to fulfil. In his employment, Rousseau says that his "affectionate vivacious character" was quickly brutalised; that he forgot all about his romances, and gave way to "the vilest tastes and the lowest kinds of rascality." All this was, of course, due to the "tyranny" of his master; though he admits that, notwithstanding the excellence of his education, he had a great tendency to degenerate. That Ducommun did treat him very badly is beyond question. But the rough engraver was perhaps not unnaturally intolerant of an apprentice who regarded his work as "servitude," and who, by his own acknowledgment, was guilty of lying, idleness, and theft.

The three years which he passed with Ducom-

[1] An extract is given by Ritter, p. 183.

mun seem to have told sadly upon him; he grew callous, restless, savage; lost every vestige of self-respect; and lived, all but friendless and completely hopeless, in surroundings which he hated more fiercely with every dreary day. One solace alone remained to him, and that was found in the unreal world opened up to him by the licentious books which he borrowed in secret from a circulating library in the town. Then accident suddenly brought a turning-point in his life. It had been his habit on Sunday evenings to wander with some companions outside the city walls. Twice on his return he had found the gates already shut, and the following day had received such treatment from his master that he made up his mind, on the second occasion, never to expose himself a third time. On Sunday evening, the 14th March 1728, however, he was again caught; and, notwithstanding his frantic efforts to reach the town, he saw the fatal gates close against him. At first he was overwhelmed by horror and fear. But before morning broke he had come to a decision. He would not return to his master. Bidding his companions farewell, and sending by them a message to his cousin Bernard, he turned his back upon his native city, and without resources, without prospects, without plans, set out upon his wanderings about the world. He was then in his sixteenth year.

At this point Jean Jacques closes the first book of his *Confessions* with a characteristic passage of retrospect and conjecture. He had now abandoned himself "to the fatality" of his "destiny." That is his way of putting it; for, like all sentimentalists, Rousseau discovered the motive-forces of his life not in his own

character and impulses, but in circumstances lying altogether beyond his control. It delighted him to picture to himself what he might have been—had he conducted himself otherwise? No—had he fallen into the hands of a better master! His days would have sped by in the simple routine of work and pleasure; his craft would have yielded the means of subsistence, and allowed him leisure enough for the cultivation of his "moderate tastes"; he would have passed his "peaceful and sweet life" in the bosom of his religion, his country, his family; he would have been good Christian, good citizen, good father, good friend, good artisan, good man in everything. But the fatality of his destiny, in the guise of Ducommun, prevented all this. What a commentary we have here upon Rousseau, man and philosopher! He really ought to have been good; it was in his nature; he loved goodness and was made for it. It was not his fault, therefore, but the fault of malign conditions, that his life turned out so differently from what might have been expected.

The spirit of vagabondage was upon him that early spring morning, as, abandoning himself to chance, he walked forth, careless as to what might happen next, and rejoicing to find himself free. Dreams, fed from his old romance-readings, filled his imagination; but, pending their realisation, he lived contentedly enough upon the bounty of the peasants in the country round about. Thus, roaming haphazard, he found himself in the course of a few days in the village of Confignon, only two miles from Geneva, though in the territory of Savoy. Tired and hungry, he there sought the elderly *curé*, M. de Pontverre, who, interested in the strange young wanderer, gave him a good dinner, over which

he expatiated on the heresies of Calvin and the authority of the Catholic Church. Rousseau declares that he could have answered the priest's arguments, but that his wine was so convincing that he would have blushed to triumph over so excellent a host. The astonishing result was, that the youth confessed himself persuaded of the errors of the theology in which he had been bred; whereupon M. de Pontverre, too wise in his generation to suggest sending him back to his family and heresy, despatched him instead to Annecy, with a letter of introduction to a recent convert there, Madame de Warens, whom he urged to do her utmost to bring the youth to a knowledge of the true faith.[1] Rousseau at once pictured this lady as a pietist of the severest type; and so slight was his anxiety to reach her, that the journey to Annecy, which might have been made in a few hours, occupied three days. He little guessed how vast and far-reaching would be the consequences of the step he was about to take.

Louise Françoise Eléanore de la Tour, Madame de Warens, at that time nearly twenty-nine years old, was a small, plump woman, of fascinating manners, open countenance, and a never-ceasing flow of animal spirits.[2] Her education seems to have done little for her, intellectually or morally, beyond giving her a rather unusual amount of miscellaneous information,

[1] Pontverre's letter to Madame de Warens is printed in Gaberel's *Rousseau et les génévois*, chap. iii.

[2] Rousseau's description of her in the *Confessions* (livre ii.) agrees substantially with that contained in a letter of M. de Conzié, a gentleman in the suite of the King of Sardinia, and afterwards a resident of Chambéry. (See Montet's *Madame de Warens et le pays de Vaud*, pp. 71, 72.) But Rousseau is the more flattering.

and a strong taste for alchemy and empiric medicine,[1] which rendered her an easy prey to charlatans of various kinds. She had married when scarcely more than a child, and had been neglected by her husband, whom she presently abandoned along with her Protestantism. She then became a *protégée* of the King of Sardinia, who, seeing in her the making of a capital political agent, settled her at Annecy with a pension of fifteen hundred livres. Restless, ambitious, speculative, she then sought in politics, commerce, and intrigue a field for the irrepressible energies for which she had found no opening in family life; and in her countless schemes and enterprises she little by little sank her own money and the money of other people. At once devout and frivolous; kind-hearted and generous of purse and person; without principle or scruple; she held virtue as a social prejudice, yet erred through caprice and self-interest rather than through passion. Such was the woman who now entered as a despotic force into the life of the shy yet sensuous youth, who had accidentally drifted under her spell. He became hers in the moment of their first meeting, with the conviction that a religion preached by such an evangelist could not fail to lead its adherents straight to Paradise.

Received with the utmost kindness by this new friend, who listened to his story with openly-expressed sympathy, Jean Jacques would willingly enough have remained indefinitely at Annecy. But as this could

[1] This may perhaps be traced directly to the influence of her father. See *Mémoires de Madame de Warens* (ostensibly autobiographical, but really the work of François Amédée Doppet, afterwards one of Napoleon's generals).

not well be, it was decided that he should be sent to Turin, where in the monastery of the Spirito Santo he could be cared for, both spiritually and temporarily, till he was in fit state to be received into the Church; after which, it was anticipated, some career would open for him. For Turin he set out accordingly. The day after his departure, Isaac Rousseau reached Annecy in quest of his son. He might easily have overtaken him, as Jean Jacques admits. But instead of trying to do this, he wept about him. Such was the extent of paternal interest and anxiety.[1] Uncle Bernard, who had also started in pursuit, and who, we may suspect, was even less eager in the chase, turned back after getting as far as Confignon.

Rousseau remained four miserable months in the Hospital of the Catechumens at Turin, having for his companions men of the lowest types and most debased characters — among them a couple of bandits, who confessed that they passed their lives embracing Christianity and getting baptized whenever and wherever they found it worth their while. And now, for the first time, he began to reflect upon the real significance of the change to which he had committed himself, marvelling greatly that a youth whose whole previous training had been so "reasonable" and "religious" should have

[1] Rousseau acknowledges that his father was not altogether averse to having him disappear, as his brother had done before him. With both his sons out of the way, Isaac was free to enjoy what was left of the small fortune which had come to them from their mother. From this curious conduct of the "best of fathers," Jean Jacques derives his famous rule of life (the only one, he says, of much practical utility) — always "to avoid situations which put our duties in opposition to our interests, and reveal our own welfare in the misfortunes of others."

thoughtlessly determined to abandon the faith which relatives and friends had been at such pains to instil into his mind and heart. Young as he was, he felt, he declares, that he was about to sell his birthright, lie before God, and merit the contempt of men. In this condition of mental stress he found a certain satisfaction in standing out for a time, and making the task of conversion a difficult one for those who had it in charge. Finally, however, he was considered ready for dismissal. He was therefore taken to church, where he made a solemn abjuration of Protestant error, and received baptism; after which he was turned out into the streets with good wishes, a benediction, and a sum of twenty francs. Thus his hopes of a career collapsed, and he awoke to a bitter realisation that he had shown himself at once apostate and dupe.

Yet it was something to be free amid all the fresh attractions of a large city, and not till his purse gave out did he begin to trouble himself as to what was to become of him. Then it dawned upon him that he must at least contrive to live; and he went from shop to shop offering his services as an engraver. Little success attended his efforts; but meanwhile he fell in with the first of those innumerable love adventures which are described with such great, and often nauseating minuteness, in the pages of the *Confessions*. An "extremely piquant brunette," whose husband was at the moment away from home, took a fancy to him, and gave him hospitality. In her society he enjoyed "the sweetest as well as the purest pleasures of love." But her husband presently appeared on the scene, and turned him, not too politely, out of doors.

A few days after this "catastrophe," Jean Jacques

was fortunate enough to find a place as lackey in the employ of the Comtesse de Vercellis. He seems to have been surprised that, having been engaged as a servant, he was treated simply as a servant, especially as his mistress took to dictating her letters to him. But this lack of "sensibility" was the only fault he could find with her. She died in a few months of cancer. And now we come to one of the most disagreeable passages in Rousseau's early life. In the confusion which ensued on the breaking up of the household, he stole a ribbon of some value; on the discovery of the theft, threw the blame upon a fellow-servant, a young girl named Marion; and, when confronted with her, lied with "infernal impudence." Writing many years after of the incident, Rousseau was inclined to believe that his atrocious conduct had done serious harm to Marion. But he explains that, so far from his action being inspired by "wickedness," his heart was "déchiré" even at the time; and his falsehood, uttered thoughtlessly, and not with deliberately evil intent, had been maintained not through fear of punishment, but from dread of shame. None the less, his behaviour had so rankled in his conscience, that his dreams were still sometimes haunted by the face of his victim! It is some satisfaction to a sentimental moralist to make rhetorical amends for an actual crime.

From the service of Madame de Vercellis, Rousseau, after some weeks of idleness and dissipation, passed into that of the Comte de Gouvon, in whose household he was treated with marked consideration. The Abbé de Gouvon, younger son of the count, was particularly kind to him, and undertook to teach him Latin and

Italian; while a beneficial influence was brought to bear upon him through his intimacy with a Savoyard ecclesiastic, the Abbé Gaïme, who was long afterwards taken as "in large part the original" of the famous *Vicaire Savoyard* in *Émile*.[1] There now seemed every prospect of his finding a settled position in the family as secretary and confidential servant. But the "fatality of his destiny" did not long allow him to remain in peace. The quiet course of his life did not fit in with his romantic notions; he saw no woman in all the kindly and judicious projects of his patrons, and soon became restless and dissatisfied. By chance he fell in with a merry, good-for-nothing Genevese, named Bâcle, a companion of his 'prentice days; neglected his duties; was reproved, and at length dismissed; and then, ungraciously refusing an offer of reinstatement, he threw in his lot with his newly-found friend. Together the two young tramps set out for Switzerland, carrying with them a Hiero's Fountain,—a sort of mechanical toy, the gift of the Abbé de Gouvon,—by the exhibition of which they managed, after a fashion, to pay their way from village to village. Thus, without the slightest regret, as he himself acknowledges, Jean Jacques abandoned his protector, his teacher, his studies, his hopes, and a future well-nigh assured, to become a mere vagabond again. The fountain presently broke down, but the accident only made the lads gayer than ever. As for Rousseau, he was completely happy, living for the moment, careless of the future, and with no feeling of constraint or sense of duty.[2] At length they reached Chambéry, ragged and almost shoeless. Here, without a moment's hesitation, Jean Jacques threw off his boon

[1] *Confessions*, livre iii. [2] *Ibid.*

companion and dear friend, and made at once for Annecy, where, with fast-beating heart, he presented himself at the abode of Madame de Warens. He had his misgivings concerning the manner in which he might be received by her. He was soon reassured. She gave him a hearty welcome; accepted his return as a matter of Providence; and took him forthwith into her household.

CHAPTER II

Rousseau and Madame de Warens (1731–1741)

Once permanently established in the old house at Annecy, which already seemed to him like home, admitted a member of a *ménage* which in every way suited his taste, and at liberty to lead a life overflowing with sentiment and wholly lacking in responsibilities, Rousseau found the cup of satisfaction filled to the brim. About the feelings which, in those early days of their intercourse, he entertained towards his protectress, he expatiates at immense length, and with all the extraordinary super-subtlety of analysis with which he habitually treats his emotional experiences. But inasmuch as the net result of his elaborate self-dissection is here, as so often elsewhere, sheer bewilderment, it would be vain for us to attempt to follow him through the labyrinth of his discussion. His chief contention seems to be that for the time being their relations—though on his side assuredly the affection was ardent enough—were purely Platonic, in thought as well as deed. The "tenderest intimacy" at once grew up between them; but the true nature of this intimacy was clearly proved by the pretty nicknames which soon became their regular modes of address. He called her "Maman"; she responded with "Petit."

Towards him, he insists, she showed herself just "the gentlest of mothers," while he regarded her with filial reverence, only rendered the more exquisite by the element of sense in his attachment; for he admits that it was certainly pleasant to have a "mamma so young and pretty, and whom it was so delicious to caress." "You will say," he adds, "that our relations ended by being very different from this. I acknowledge it. But you must wait. I cannot speak of everything at once."[1]

Meanwhile he had plenty to occupy his time, for he assisted Madame de Warens with her multitudinous projects and experiments, and helped to entertain her motley tribes of visitors. At his leisure he dipped into the books he chanced to find in his bedroom—the *Spectator*, Puffendorf, Saint Evremond, *La Henriade*, and began for the first time to pay some attention to matters of style. Sometimes he would talk over his studies with "mamma," and together they read the worldly-wise La Bruyère. He felt that he profited greatly by these literary conversations. It is true that, when she moralised, she was apt to lose herself in space. But as he was privileged to kiss her hands or lips, from time to time, he learned patience, and her "longueurs" did not much trouble him.

For himself, indeed, he would have been perfectly willing to spend life and eternity in this delightful routine, for though some of his daily duties were admittedly tiresome and ridiculous enough, he enjoyed them for "mamma's" sake. But "mamma" seems presently to have grown anxious to get him off her hands, and to that end consulted a relative, M.

[1] *Confessions*, livre iii.

d'Aubonne, on the question of a possible career for him. M. d'Aubonne pronounced the young man very limited in intelligence, and therefore advised that he should be made into a parish priest. Upon this, much to his disgust, Jean Jacques was sent to the Lazarist Seminary at Annecy, where, notwithstanding his devotion to one of his teachers, M. Gâtier,—who afterwards entered with M. Gaïme into the character of the Savoyard vicar,[1]—he made such unsatisfactory progress with his studies, that he was in due course returned to his patroness as hopelessly inept even for the priesthood. Most of his time in the seminary had been given to the study of music, and his newly-awakened enthusiasm for that art naturally suggested to Madame de Warens the idea that here perhaps was the real opening for his talents. So another attempt was made to start him in a profession, and he was placed *en pension* with M. Nicolaz, the choirmaster of the cathedral.[2] For a number of months things went smoothly enough. Then, most unfortunately, Nicolaz quarrelled with his precentor, and left Annecy in the greatest haste. At "mamma's" urgent request, Jean Jacques set out with him with the intention of accompanying him at least as far as Lyons. Desire for his welfare and for that of Nicolaz is alleged by Rousseau as her motive in this action; but we may suspect that her own interests had something to do with it, for the young man must at this time have been a good deal of a burden to her, and she could not fail

[1] "Réunissant M. Gâtier avec M. Gaïme, je fis de ces deux dignes prêtres l'original du vicaire Savoyard" (*Confessions*, livre iii.).

[2] Nicolaz figures in the *Confessions* as M. Le Maître. Rousseau is in error in giving this as his name. It was simply the title of courtesy by which he commonly went.

to notice that he was disliked by her other friends. However that may be, Jean Jacques followed her directions, and the journey to Lyons was accomplished, for a wonder, without any noteworthy adventure happening by the way. Then comes another of Rousseau's "painful confessions." Two days after their arrival in Lyons, Nicolaz, who was a heavy drinker and a man of epileptic tendency, was seized with a fit in a narrow street not far from their inn. Rousseau waited long enough to see a crowd gather, to beg assistance, and even name the inn; and then, when no one was looking, he slipped round the corner and fled, basely deserting his companion in his extremity. "Had I many such avowals to make," adds Rousseau, as a commentary upon this incident, "I should abandon the autobiography which I have commenced."

Having thus washed his hands of Nicolaz, he made his way hurriedly back to Annecy, only to find that in his absence Madame de Warens, for what reason he never learned, had left for Paris. Thrown on his own resources, and filled with astonishment and grief, he hung about Annecy for a time, idling his days away in vain expectation of her return, and finding some consolation in the society of "mamma's" chambermaid, Mdlle. Merceret, and her friends. After a while, Mdlle. Merceret, receiving no news of her mistress, decided to go home to her father at Fribourg, and Jean Jacques, having nothing else to do, bore her company. Compared with other incidents in Rousseau's eventful existence, this may be regarded as nothing but a bagatelle. But by him nothing in his career could be so regarded—every occurrence, no matter how trivial, had its importance. And so here we find him linger-

ing to assert his belief that in this brief intercourse with a simple servant girl Providence had offered him a chance which, had he accepted it, would have assured him a happy life. He ought to have married her; she was a good girl, and really liked him; then he could have settled in Fribourg—and so on, and so on. Out of the most unpromising material Rousseau's imagination was potent to evolve idyllic visions of what might have been.

The route to Fribourg lay through Nyon, and there Jean Jacques took the opportunity of visiting his "good father," now married again. The paternal heart was deeply touched by the wanderer's reappearance; the two embraced again and again, mingling their ever-ready tears. But that was all. The youth did not even stay to supper, to which his stepmother, "a good woman, but rather smooth-tongued," made feint to press him; and the next day he continued his journey. At Fribourg he saw Mdlle. Merceret safely in charge of her father, and then, bidding her farewell—strange to say, without weeping on either side—he left the town, having no definite plans as to where he meant to go or what he was to do next.

He had promised his father that, on his return from Fribourg, he would visit him again, and make a longer stay. But instead of going back to Nyon, he now made his way to Lausanne, for the sole purpose—and he cites this as an illustration of the fantastic motives which habitually determined his conduct—of enjoying the view of the beautiful lake, which is thence seen at its best. He arrived at Lausanne penniless; but by dint of a few "little lies," which he had arranged in advance, he persuaded a good-natured innkeeper to

give him part-board on credit. How is it, he pauses at this point to wonder, that, having encountered so many kind people in his youth, he met with so few in later life? And the reply he gives is worth quoting, for it strikes a note to which we shall presently find him recurring again and again. "Is their race exhausted? No; but the class where I am bound to seek them to-day is no longer that in which I then found them. Among the people, in whom the great passions speak only at intervals, the feelings of nature more frequently express themselves. In the higher ranks they are absolutely stifled, and, under the mask of sentiment, it is only interest or vanity which speaks."

Having solved the immediate problem of how to live from one day to another without making futile demands upon an empty purse, Rousseau now proceeded to the carrying out of an utterly mad scheme which had taken possession of his mind. Without any real knowledge of his art, he impudently set up as a teacher of music, calling himself Vaussore de Villeneuve,[1] and giving himself out as a Parisian. Of course, he soon covered himself with confusion. He undertook to conduct a composition of his own at a private concert. The farce ended in just such a tragedy as might have been anticipated; and all his pretensions came down with a crash. In his humiliation and disappointment he found in "the sex," as usual, "a great consoling power"; for his keen affection for "mamma," which suffered no decrease,

[1] The first part of this highly romantic name is an anagram of Rousseau; the second was borrowed from Venture de Villeneuve, a young Parisian débauché, with whom he had been intimate at Annecy, and whose own experiments as music teacher suggested to Jean Jacques the present absurd freak.

did not prevent him from loving numerous other women, though not (whatever this may mean) "after the same fashion."

As after his downfall, professional duties did not take up much of his time, and as he still lived in full assurance that sooner or later he would rediscover Madame de Warens, Rousseau now conceived the idea of making a sentimental pilgrimage to her birthplace at Vévai, only a few miles from Lausanne. For two or three days he wandered by the Lake of Geneva, giving himself up to the most delicious melancholy, and indulging in wonderful visions of a "sweet and happy life" in that entrancing country. He must have—this much was essential—an orchard on the bank, a firm friend, an amiable wife, a cow, and a little boat. Till these were obtained, he felt, there could be no perfect satisfaction for him on earth. His heart melted under the influence of these pastoral fancies; he sighed and wept like a child; often stopping, that he might cry at his ease, he would sit on a large stone, and amuse himself with watching his tears drop into the water. Already Rousseau, the sentimentalist, had discovered the secret of those later "men of feeling," who, largely under his influence, taught a romantic generation that there was no enjoyment equal to the luxury of woe.

Finding little but starvation in prospect at Lausanne, Jean Jacques moved thence, in the winter of 1730–1731, to Neufchâtel. By dint of teaching music he had by this time learned something of it, and, having no other means of livelihood, he still had perforce to depend upon the practice of his art. But as a begging letter to his father, written at this period, shows, his life for

many months was one of grinding poverty and hopeless struggle. From this he was rescued temporarily by a chance encounter, the results of which were so surprising, that, even when we come to them in their place among Rousseau's bizarre experiences, it is difficult to think of them without a touch of suspicion. One day in April 1731,[1] during one of those long country rambles which he so much enjoyed, he met, at an inn at Boudry, a white-bearded man, in Greek costume, who called himself Athanasius Paulus, represented himself as an archimandrite of the Greek Church, and, according to his own story, was then touring Europe, collecting money for the restoration of the Holy Sepulchre and the liberation of Christian slaves. Rousseau soon noticed that this picturesque individual, through ignorance of French, found some trouble in making his wants known. He therefore addressed him in Italian, greatly to the old man's delight. Over the capital dinner which followed, the two became inseparable; and in the end Jean Jacques accepted an offer from his new friend, to accompany him in the capacity of secretary and interpreter. Rousseau himself made no special terms, but the archimandrite made up for this by grandiose promises; and the next morning the oddly assorted pair started off together for Jerusalem.

They never reached the Holy City; for, after they had visited Fribourg and Berne—at which latter place Rousseau received many compliments upon his spirited advocacy before the Senate of the case entrusted to him—their tour, not a little to his regret, ended suddenly at Soleure, where the French Ambassador at once exposed the fraudulent character of the so-called

[1] Rousseau himself wrongly places this incident a year later.

archimandrite's pretensions. The moment was a critical one for Jean Jacques, but his Excellency, realising that he had been merely the dupe and tool of an accomplished scoundrel, took pity on him, and offered to send him to Paris; his plan being that he should there enter the service of a young man—the nephew of a friend of the Ambassador's secretary—who was about to join the army. Rousseau gave no thought to the practical aspects of this proposal; he accepted it eagerly, just because it secured him further wanderings and the chance of getting to Paris. So, provided with some letters of introduction and a hundred francs for expenses, he set out for the French capital.

He made the entire journey on foot, and, with hope in his heart and plenty of money in his pocket, was too happy to hurry; and thus it took him a full fortnight to reach his destination. During that time his imagination, as fertile as ever, ran riot among strange and magnificent day-dreams; and, under the influence of the new prospects which had opened before him, his fancies took a martial turn. Already he saw himself in officer's costume, with a fine white plume; his mind was filled with thoughts of smoke, and fire, and military glory. Only, as he passed on through quiet stretches of country, by wooded uplands and gentle brooks, a disturbing element broke in upon his hot ambitions. He felt how little indeed he was made for all the tumult and excitement of war, and found himself ready on the instant to abandon the soldier's career, even though a marshal's baton might be the reward of his courage and skill.

Of Rousseau's first visit to Paris there is little to record. The city itself disappointed him terribly—he

had pictured it to himself as of Babylonian splendour, and found it, in reality, gloomy, dirty, altogether unattractive; while the unpleasant conditions of the position he had been sent there to fill very soon completed his disgust. He was therefore glad enough to make his escape. Learning that Madame de Warens was no longer in the capital, he determined, though her whereabouts was quite uncertain, to start out in quest of her, and, in pursuance of this intention, he left Paris for Annecy.

One incident of this, the last of his long pedestrian tours, is too important to be omitted. Exploring with his customary enthusiasm a particularly beautiful bit of scenery, he lost his way completely, wandered alone for hours in a vain attempt to find the road, and finally, half-dead from fatigue, hunger, and thirst, presented himself at the cottage of a peasant, whose hospitality he implored. The man gave him some coarse barley-bread and skimmed milk—the best, he told him, that he had, and of these the youth made an indifferent repast. What followed must be related in Rousseau's own words: "The peasant, who examined me closely, judged of the truth of my story by that of my appetite. All of a sudden, after remarking that he saw clearly enough that I was a good, honest young man, who had not come there to betray him, he opened a little trap-door, near his kitchen, descended, and reappeared the next moment with a brown loaf of fine wheat, a ham, appetising though already cut, and a bottle of wine, the sight of which gladdened my heart more than all the rest; to this he added a thick omelette; and I made such a dinner as no pedestrian ever before sat down to. When it came to paying him, his disquietude

and fear again took possession of him; he did not wish my money, and pushed it back to me with much agitation; and the singular thing about it was, that I could not imagine the cause of his alarm. At length, he tremblingly uttered the terrible words—commissioners and excisemen. He gave me to understand that he hid his wine on account of the duties, and his bread on account of the tax; and that he would be a lost man if he did not lead people to suppose that he was dying of hunger. All that he told me about this subject—of which previously I had not had the slightest idea—made an impression upon me which will never be effaced. There was the germ of that inextinguishable hatred which developed later in my heart against the vexations endured by the poor, and against their oppressors. This man, though well-to-do, did not dare to eat the bread he had gained by the sweat of his brow, and could prevent his ruin only by imitating the misery which reigned around him. I left his house as indignant as I was sad, deploring the fate of those beautiful countries upon which Nature has lavished her gifts only that they may become the prey of barbarous publicans."[1]

At length, after many delays, many odd adventures, many aimless *détours*, he reached Chambéry, where, as he had ultimately learned, Madame de Warens was now settled. She received him kindly, obtained for him a small position in the office of the Surveyor-General of the king, and made room for him once more in her own household.

The eight or nine years following—that is, from 1732 to 1741—Rousseau spent for the most part with "mamma"; and this period of his life seemed to him,

[1] *Confessions*, livre iv.

in retrospect at least, singularly placid and uneventful. He found her *ménage* pretty much what he had known it at Annecy, and his own relations with her remained for a time upon the rather peculiar footing already described. But these presently underwent an important change, under conditions which to the non-sentimental reader must appear in the last degree surprising. At the head of the establishment, and in general charge of its affairs, was a young man named Claude Anet, who belonged to a peasant family long attached to that of La Tour, and who had abjured Protestantism about the same time as Madame de Warens. An amateur botanist of some pretensions, he had been of great service to his mistress through his knowledge of plants and drugs, and before the date of Rousseau's reappearance upon the scene, he was in the enjoyment of her most intimate favours. As to this matter there is nothing to be said; our astonishment begins only when we learn that "mamma," without discarding Claude, by and by extended the same favours to Jean Jacques, and that the two lovers continued to dwell under one roof not only without quarrelling, but even in the most warmly reciprocated amity and esteem. It is true that both through "natural delicacy," and because he felt that the situation was worthy neither of his mistress nor of himself, Rousseau experienced some uneasiness of mind, and that he was never quite certain how far Claude Anet himself realised what had taken place. But however that might be, the fact remains that his own profound respect for his mistress was not so much as disturbed by the knowledge that he did not hold undivided dominion of her affections, and that no jealousy or serious misunderstanding ever marred the

companionship of the two young men. Did any momentary difference arise between them, "mamma" proved a ready peacemaker, softening their hearts, and making them embrace one another with tears, while she told them that they "were both necessary to the happiness of her life." "Thus," says Rousseau, after describing her amazing conduct, "a society was established among us three without parallel perhaps in the world. All our vows, our cares, our hearts, were in common. . . . The habit of living together, and of living wholly to ourselves, became so strong, that if, at our meals, one of the three were wanting, or a fourth person appeared, everything was upset; and, despite our private *liaisons, tête-à-têtes* were less sweet to us than reunion."[1]

This extraordinary triple alliance was at the end of two years broken up by the death of Claude Anet, which left Jean Jacques in undisputed possession. Thus far he had devoted himself with laudable industry to the duties of his clerkship. It gave him no small satisfaction to find himself, for the first time in his life, earning his bread honourably, and he even took up the study of arithmetic for the help it would afford him in his work. Thus, with regular tasks for every day, and reading and botanising for his spare hours, his time was, on the whole, profitably filled. But the dull routine of an office presently became intolerable to his mercurial nature. With no better reason than restlessness and a desire for change, he threw up his place, and took to teaching music at Chambéry. Though better prepared for such work now than he had been at the time of his famous

[1] *Confessions*, livre v.

experiment at Neufchâtel, he was still a mere amateur; but, on the principle that "in the kingdom of blind men, the one-eyed is king," his efforts met with some success. Of course he fell in love with all the young girls who became his pupils. There were a good many of them, but he notes it as "singular" that he could not remember one who was not charming.

Poor Claude Anet had kept something like order in a household which "mamma's" own recklessness and the charlatans and speculators who continually overran it, would otherwise have brought to speedy ruin. Jean Jacques now stepped into his position and responsibilities, but was altogether unequal, mentally and morally, to the task which devolved into his hands. Things gradually went from bad to worse, and in the two or three years which followed, Rousseau lived in a state of febrile agitation, which ended in an attack of hypochondriacal melancholia. An accident which happened to him while making a chemical experiment all but caused his death; and after this he fell seriously ill. Madame de Warens nursed him with unfailing tenderness and care, and upon his partial restoration to health, consented for his sake to a fundamental change in her domestic life. He had always hated the town, and had felt ill at ease in the gloomy old house at Chambéry, with its cheerless outlook upon walls and streets. Now he yearned more than ever for the quiet country; and to meet his wishes, "mamma" rented a cottage just outside the city gate, but so retired and solitary that it might have been a hundred miles away. This cottage was on an estate belonging to M. de Conzié, called Les Charmettes, a spot rendered famous for all time by Rousseau's glowing descriptions of his life

there. So far as he could recall dates, it was towards the end of the summer of 1736 that he and Madame de Warens took possession of their new abode. "I was transported," he writes, "the first day that we stayed there. O mamma, I exclaimed to that dear friend, while I embraced her and flooded her with tears of tenderness and joy, this is the home of happiness and innocence. If we cannot find them here with one another, it is vain to seek them anywhere."[1]

At Les Charmettes the days sped by to his utter satisfaction — days which he reckoned as comprising "the brief happiness of his life" — days which alone gave him the right to say that he had lived at all.[2] "Precious and much regretted moments! Ah, renew for me your gentle course! Flow more slowly through my memory, if that be possible, than you did in reality in your transitory succession! How can I manage to prolong, as I should wish, this simple and touching recital, in order perpetually to say the same things, yet without wearying my readers more by repeating them, than I weary myself in going over them again and again? If all this consisted merely of facts, actions, words, I might in some fashion describe and express them. But how shall I tell of what was neither said, nor done, nor even thought, but tasted and felt, and without my being able to indicate any other object of happiness save this feeling itself? I rose with the sun, and I was happy; I walked abroad, and I was happy; I saw 'mamma,' and I was happy; I left her, and I

[1] *Confessions*, livre v.

[2] It is interesting to compare with the record of the *Confessions* (livre vi.), the poem entitled *Le Verger des Charmettes*, dating from this time.

was happy; I explored the woods and the hill-slopes; I wandered in the valleys; I read; I was idle; I worked in the garden; I gathered fruit; I helped in the labours of the household; and happiness followed me everywhere. It did not depend upon any assignable thing. It was all in myself; it could not forsake me a single moment."[1]

However, even the air and the delights of the country did not restore Jean Jacques to his former health; on the contrary, he began to suffer from attacks of illness of a fresh and alarming character, arising apparently from very serious disturbance of the nervous system and the circulation. Persuaded that he had not long to live, he presently occupied himself with religious speculation, much aided by "mamma," whose orthodox Catholicism did not prevent her from being at the same time a very good free-thinker. A fortunate change in diet and régime ultimately brought him fresh life and ambition, and his taste for theology gave way before a growing interest in the sciences, to which he now began to apply himself with great enthusiasm. But morbid feelings still from time to time invaded his mind. In the midst of his studies and innocent pleasures he would stop short to ask himself—In what condition am I? If I should die now, should I be damned? And he records how, one day, he discovered a strange method of obtaining an answer to this question. He had been mechanically throwing stones at the trunks of trees, and with his usual address had missed his mark as often as he threw. Suddenly he determined to make this amusement a sort of "prognostic" of his fate. "I said to myself: I will throw

[1] *Confessions*, livre vi.

this stone at that tree opposite; if I hit, it will be a sign of salvation; if I miss, it will be a sign of damnation. Speaking thus, I threw my stone with a trembling hand and a horrible beating of the heart, but so fortunately, that I struck the tree right in the centre —not a very difficult matter, indeed, for I had been careful to select one very thick and close at hand. Thenceforth I have never doubted of my salvation. I do not know, recalling this incident, whether I ought to laugh or groan at myself. You others, great men, who will certainly laugh, congratulate yourselves, but do not insult my misery, for I swear to you that I feel it keenly."[1]

But the happiness at Les Charmettes, though it conquered all difficulties, physical and spiritual, was destined to come to a close. Jean Jacques was again attacked by illness, and this time he decided that he was suffering from polypus of the heart. At "mamma's" advice he went to Montpelier to consult physicians there. On the way, despite his moribund condition, he had a characteristic love adventure, and in a freakish mood, which he himself does not seek to account for, passed himself off, under the name of Dudding, as an English Jacobite. One advantage of all this was, that for the time being he forgot that he was ill. At Montpelier he idled away a number of weeks without profit to health or mind. Then he returned suddenly to "mamma." "Ah, here you are, petit," she said, embracing him. "Have you had a pleasant journey? And how are you?" Her cool reception dumbfounded him, but he soon realised what had happened. During his absence his place had been filled.

[1] *Confessions*, livre vi.

Some time before this, on his return from a brief trip to Geneva, he had noticed, among the miscellaneous people who congregated in "mamma's" house, a blonde young man, named Rudolph Wintzenried—according to Rousseau's account, a vain, ignorant, insolent coxcomb of a travelling hairdresser, without the slightest attraction of appearance or manner.[1] This was the successor whom he now found in possession of Madame de Warens' home and heart.

In a moment all his dreams of future happiness vanished into thin air. Refusing this time to go shares in "mamma's" favour, he remained for a time an alien in the household, shutting himself up with his books, or sighing and weeping in the solitude of the woods. At last the situation became insupportable, and he was glad to avail himself of an offer to go to Lyons as tutor to the two children of M. de Mably, brother of the famous Gabriel Bonnot de Mably, the writer, and the even more famous Abbé Condillac.

As a practical teacher the future author of *Émile* proved a wretched failure[2]—a year's experiment sufficed to convince him, once and for all, of his total ineptitude for a vocation upon which he had entered with high hopes bred of supreme confidence in his powers. But his own moral progress was not unworthy of remark. He conducted himself with praiseworthy decency; and, having during his residence with "mamma" got over his taste for petty roguery, he now stole nothing but wine, though he was surrounded by all sorts of

[1] It is only fair to add that Wintzenried does not appear to have merited all the abuse which, in his bitterness of spirit, Rousseau heaped upon him.

[2] He acknowledges this, not only in the *Confessions*, but in the introductory paragraphs of *Émile*.

desirable things upon which he could easily have laid his hand. That incidentally he fell in love with Madame de Mably will be taken as a matter of course.

At the end of the year a great homesickness came upon him, and, though fully alive to the exceeding folly of his conduct, he returned to Madame de Warens. Against his better judgment, he had cherished tender hopes that the threads of the dear old life could even yet be gathered up again. But this could not be. Things at Chambéry were now in hopeless confusion, and the complete ruin of the household was evidently only a question of shorter or longer time. "Mamma" received him kindly, but he had not been with her a half-hour before he realised that their ancient happiness was dead for ever. Consumed with vain regrets, a prey to the blackest melancholy, he again sought the consolation of his books. But he soon saw that it was of no use. He could not remain a stranger in the household where formerly he had been treated as a spoilt child. A new ambition now seized him—to go out into the world and make his fortune, and then return to rescue "mamma" in the hour of her desperate need. And with this end in view, he sold his books, gathered his little money together, and started a second time for Paris.

CHAPTER III

Paris, Venice, and Paris again (1741–1756)

Rousseau reached Paris in the autumn of 1741, with his head filled as usual with all sorts of magnificent dreams. He had taken the precaution to stop at Lyons on the way, and had obtained from M. de Mably some letters of introduction to influential people in the metropolis—among them Fontenelle and the Comte de Caylus. A little love passage at Lyons was of no special importance, save that it served to convince him that, if it costs something to make sacrifices for duty and virtue, one is well repaid by the sweet recollections which are left in the heart.

His capital on arrival in Paris consisted of fifteen livres, a comedy entitled *Narcisse*, which dates, according to his own statement, from 1733,[1] and an entirely new system of musical notation by figures, which he had elaborated during his last weeks at Chambéry, and upon which he based his hopes of immediate success. Taking up quarters in a villainous room in a villainous hotel in a villainous street—the Hotel Saint Quentin, rue des Cordiers, near the Sorbonne—he began by

[1] In his preface to *Narcisse*, he declares that the work was written when he was only eighteen. But he admits in the *Confessions* that he had "lied by some years."

delivering his letters; but though they received him politely, his new acquaintances did little for him. At length Réaumur, the celebrated scientist, interested himself in the musical project, and through his assistance Rousseau was given the opportunity of submitting his design to the Academy of Sciences. He read his *Mémoire* before that illustrious body on the 22nd August 1742, and was the recipient of many compliments. Three Academicians were appointed as a committee to examine the system in detail, and, acting on their report, the Academy in due course awarded the author a certificate full of pleasant verbiage, but in which the method was pronounced neither original nor useful. Rousseau complains with pardonable bitterness that the members of the committee knew far too little of music to be qualified to judge of the technical matters which had been placed before them, and adds the caustic remark that though scientific men have perhaps fewer prejudices than other people, they make up for this by holding all the more tenaciously to those which they have. However, though discouraged, he would not yet acknowledge himself beaten, and made up his mind to appeal from the Academy to the public. He spent two or three months in rewriting his *Mémoire*, and after some difficulty found a publisher to produce it for him. But the public cared no more than the Academy had done for his proposed musical reform. He then conceived the idea of giving a free exhibition of his system, and proved its value by teaching a young American lady in three months to read any ordinary music at sight. But even this striking achievement led to no practical result.

Once more his castles in the air had come down about

his ears; his gold mine had failed; and now, at thirty years of age, he found himself in the streets of Paris without plan or prospect of any kind. Yet instead of giving way to despair, he abandoned himself very tranquilly to "idleness and the care of Providence." He wandered in the gardens of the Luxembourg every morning, played chess in the afternoon, and spent his evenings in the *café* or at the theatre, never losing his sense of perfect security and confidence, and waiting very cheerfully for the time to come when he should get to the bottom of his purse. One is not born a vagabond and a loafer for nothing, and those of us who suffer from ambition or a feeling of responsibility may be forgiven, perhaps, if sometimes we are inclined to envy the shiftless Bohemian temperament which carries a man through difficulties under which we should probably collapse. There was still *Narcisse* to fall back upon, if the final pinch came. Marivaux had been pleased with the piece, and had even offered to retouch it. But it was not, in fact, till many years later that the comedy was put upon the stage.

Rousseau was rescued from his indolence and apathy by a Jesuit named Castel—a "foolish fellow," but with sense enough to regret that a man still young should drift to ruin without making an effort to recover himself. Wise in the wisdom of the world, for all his alleged stupidity, he advised Jean Jacques to try his fortune with women, since nothing was to be accomplished in Paris without their aid; and he even secured for him an introduction to several great ladies of the day — to Madame de Beuzenval and her daughter, Madame de Broglie, and above all to the beautiful and fascinating wife of the *Fermier-général*, Madame

Dupin, whose salon was one of the most brilliant in Paris. The suggestion fell in with Rousseau's humour, and he acted upon it. His first interview with Madame Dupin (who, after the fashion of the times, received him at her toilette) turned his head completely, and he fell in love with her on the spot. Not daring to declare himself to her face, and yet unable to restrain his feelings, he took the foolish course of writing to her. After three days his letter was handed back to him by the lady herself, who did not neglect the chance of accompanying it with "some words of exhortation" in a tone so cold that it froze the answer upon his lips. None the less she continued to receive him as if nothing had happened, though M. de Francueil, the lady's step-son, gave him to understand that his visits were too frequent. Meanwhile, Madame de Beuzenval and Madame de Broglie had not forgotten him, as was presently shown in a very practical way. For through their influence he obtained the post of secretary to the Comte de Montaigu on his appointment as ambassador to Venice.

Rousseau started for Italy in the summer of 1743, and after three weeks' quarantine at Genoa, where he was detained by the plague, made a pleasant journey thence through Milan, Verona, Brescia, and Padua, to his destination. He regretted, he says, that owing to the war and the state of his purse, he could not go by way of Chambéry to see his "poor mamma." We know, however, that he did go by way of Chambéry.[1] That this does not figure in his narrative must be due, if not to forgetfulness (which seems unlikely), to some

[1] See letter from Montaigu to the Abbé Alary, quoted by Faugère in *Rousseau à Venise* (*Le Correspondent*, tome cli. p. 1069).

unknown reason for his not wishing to mention the incident.

Everything is bizarre in Rousseau's life, and not the least of all, the extraordinary good fortune which attended him in spite of all his own folly and recklessness. He had tried half a dozen different careers, and had failed; but as fast as one door shut against him, another opened unexpectedly. Now, at thirty-one, he was to make an entirely fresh start, this time in diplomacy, which it is safe to say he had never before thought of, and for which he certainly had neither preparation nor special aptitude.

He soon made himself master of his routine duties, which were not particularly difficult, and for a time everything went satisfactorily.[1] According to his own account, indeed, he behaved with great tact and sagacity in more than one negotiation, and proved himself of immense value to the embassy. But ere long threatening clouds began to gather upon the horizon. Montaigu was an ignorant, conceited, ill-tempered man, totally unfit for a position which he had obtained solely through social rank and influence, and the occurrence of disturbances between him and Jean Jacques was, sooner or later, inevitable. Troubles presently arose from the shameless misconduct of the ambassador's domestic affairs, about which Rousseau makes much complaint; but the first serious quarrel sprang out of a question of etiquette. Montaigu was to give a dinner to the Duke of Modena and his family,

[1] Rousseau's life in Venice has been made the subject of special research by J. J. Faugère (*Le Correspondent*, 10th and 25th June 1888), Saint Marc-Girardin (*Journal des Débats*, 22nd January 1862), and V. Ceresole in his *Rousseau à Venise*.

and notified his secretary that, as he was not even a "gentleman," he could not have a place at table on an occasion when even mere gentlemen were not to be admitted. Rousseau retorted that his position as secretary gave him precedence over ordinary gentlemen, and that, having dined in public with the Doge and the Senate, he did not see why he should not dine in private with the Duke of Modena. As it happened, however, the Duke after all did not come, and the matter therefore dropped. But from that time on the unpleasantness between the uncongenial pair grew apace. None the less, Montaigu was in no hurry to get rid of his secretary, whose usefulness he could not but appreciate, and in order to retain his services he adopted the very practical plan of withholding his salary. In this, however, he overshot the mark. Thoroughly persuaded that he could now look for nothing but injustice and brutality, Rousseau determined, salary or no salary, to effect his escape. After a dramatic scene, in which (if we are to accept the record of the *Confessions*) he conducted himself with great coolness and spirit, while Montaigu, in a frenzy of anger, threatened to throw him out of the window, he bade his patron farewell in the fewest possible words, and without waiting for reply walked calmly out of the embassy, never to enter it again.[1] He had held his post about ten months.

Once more Rousseau was stranded, without money and without plans. But he was saved from immediate disaster by the kindness of friends. The French Consul

[1] Recounting the incident in a letter to Du Theil of the 8th August 1744, Rousseau gives us to understand that before this stormy interview he had already received his discharge. This does not harmonise with the account in the *Confessions* (livre vii.).

invited him to dinner; many French residents of Venice were present, and proffered assistance. Montaigu meanwhile pursued him with insults and threats of bodily violence. But, determined not to be intimidated, he remained a fortnight in Venice, openly showing himself everywhere, and ostentatiously paying his visits of farewell. To complete this part of the story, it may here be added, that on his return to Paris he made repeated attempts to get "satisfaction and reparation" for the treatment he had received, and that his failure to secure anything more substantial than promises and empty sympathy, filled him with the bitterest feelings against "our stupid civil institutions," with their authoritative sanction of "the oppression of the weak and the iniquity of the strong."

His official life in Venice had taught him much, if only by revealing hitherto unsuspected qualities of intellect and character. His unofficial life had run pretty much in what for him was the customary course. He had made acquaintances among "people of merit"; had devoted himself with ever-increasing ardour to music; and had indulged in sundry low *amours*, into the unedifying particulars of which he enters, as usual, with quite unnecessary minuteness. However, the immorality of the "most immoral of cities" had one advantage. It was gross enough to disgust even Rousseau.

He returned to Paris by way of Geneva, and contrived at Nyon to have an interview with his father without his stepmother's knowledge. It is perhaps worthy of remark that, despite some vague notion of a reunion with "poor mamma," he did not now avail himself of the opportunity of seeing her again. On

reaching Paris he found that his story had preceded him. He was well received by his former friends, with the exception of Madame de Beuzenval and Father Castel; but, having no idea as to where he was to turn next, he soon drifted back into his shiftless and Bohemian habits of life. For a time he lived with an "amiable" young Biscayan, named Altuna, with whom there was indeed some talk of his going to Spain; but Altuna presently left Paris without him, and he then returned to his villainous little hotel near the Sorbonne. His condition was now more abjectly miserable than ever. Failure in yet another attempt to find a career filled him with discouragement; he was becoming more and more aware of his own powers, but it seemed hopeless to seek any opening where these might be made to tell. One lesson, however, he had plucked out of his latest disappointment—the lesson of self-dependence. Henceforth he would attach himself to no one, and trust wholly to his own efforts. Before his call to Venice, he had made some headway with an opera. He now determined to finish this with the least possible delay.

Before this task was completed, however, a change of the most momentous character had come over Rousseau's life. For at this point we enter upon one of the most extraordinary chapters in all his extraordinary history.

The Hotel Saint Quentin had passed into fresh hands during his absence, and the new landlady had brought with her from Orleans a girl whom she employed to look after the household linen. Thérèse le Vasseur was then between twenty-two and twenty-three years of age, and was one of the innumerable children of a

father and mother who, having gone utterly to pieces in their native city, had come to Paris, where they now lived upon their daughter's earnings. Like the hostess herself—for such was the primitive way of the house —Thérèse sat at table with the guests, where she was made the butt of their rough and ribald jocularity. Struck by her modest demeanour, Rousseau constituted himself the girl's champion. Compassion on his side was answered by gratitude on hers. The tenderest feelings soon sprang up between them. He needed "a successor to mamma," and such a successor—*mirabile dictu!*—he discovered in Thérèse. She became his wife in all but name, and in her companionship, he declares, he found the only real consolation which Heaven ever vouchsafed him in his misery, and that which alone made his life endurable.[1]

Despite the rhetorical charm which Rousseau's sophisticating pages throw over this *liaison*, it is difficult to place ourselves at any point of view from which his account of it may be made to seem intelligible. It certainly did not minister to the higher needs of his nature, for it afforded him neither intellectual stimulus nor moral support. Thérèse, as he himself frankly admits, was hopelessly stupid. He tried to educate her, but he only wasted his efforts. She could never be taught to read with facility, though she wrote "passably" well;[2] she could not, after a whole month's drill, tell the time by the clock; she could never remember the order of the months; she

[1] *Confessions*, livre vii.

[2] How "passably" may be seen from the astonishing orthography of her letters, as given, in extracts, in Streckeisen-Moultou's *Rousseau, ses Amis et ses Ennemis*. It may suffice to say that she signed herself "fame due gean iacque Rousseau."

could not reckon money, nor be certain of the price of anything. The wrong word always came to her in speaking, and Rousseau amused his friends by collecting her malapropisms. But he insists that she possessed excellent common sense, and could behave in moments of danger or difficulty with an intuitive sense of the right thing to be done which often filled him with amazement. Those about him marvelled then—as we marvel now—as to the satisfaction which such a man could conceivably find in the constant society of a woman of whose mental limitations he was himself fully aware, who could boast of no personal attractions, and who impressed all who knew her as irredeemably vulgar and coarse. But we have to remember that, notwithstanding all his sentimental vapourings and high-flown eloquence, Rousseau had really no conception of marriage as the sympathetic union of equal minds. He found all that he wanted in a compound of sensual satisfaction and domestic peace, and in this fact, I take it, we must seek the explanation of the mystery of an attachment which must otherwise, as soon as the first passion was over, have ended rapidly enough in satiety and disgust. "I lived with my Thérèse," he himself asserts, "as pleasantly as with the finest genius in the world." We may accept this declaration of happiness as true in respect of at least a dozen years of their union. Here it may be added that, despite his gross neglect of certain of his domestic responsibilities, his loyalty to the woman he had chosen as his companion remains one of the most pleasing features of his life.

Unfortunately, in taking Thérèse, he had also to saddle himself with her family, and over the Le

Vasseurs it was impossible even for him to cast a sentimental charm. Hungry, avaricious, unscrupulous, they descended upon him like so many birds of prey—sisters, sons, daughters, granddaughters — headed by Madame le Vasseur, a woman in whose sordid and rapacious character there does not seem to have been a single redeeming trait. That he bore with all these creatures for the sake of Thérèse must be set down to the credit of his patience and devotion. Keenly as he felt the indignity of his position, he made no decisive move till he discovered that behind his back, Madame le Vasseur was poisoning her daughter's mind against him, and extorting money and presents from his friends. Then, properly enough, he declared that his power of endurance had come to an end. But this final rupture did not take place till a number of years had passed; and meanwhile the constant presence of Thérèse's worthless relations was a pregnant source of trouble, anxiety, and alarm.

And here we will dismiss as briefly as possible a passage of Rousseau's family history over which no one would wish to linger longer than is absolutely necessary.

In course of time a child was born, and the little stranger's most inopportune advent in the midst of pressing poverty brought fresh responsibilities which Rousseau was unprepared to shoulder. He saw but one way of evading them, and he took it, as he himself declares, "boldly and without the slightest scruple." Despite the protestations of poor Thérèse, the baby was sent by the hands of a nurse to the Foundling Hospital. The following year a second "embarrassment" was disposed of in the same manner, the

mother's grief being again of no avail. Five children in all, according to Rousseau's own statement, which is probably, though not certainly, correct, were thus unhesitatingly abandoned as soon as born; and so little did the unnatural father concern himself about them or their fate, that he did not even trouble to keep a record of the dates of their birth; and when, a number of years later, the Maréchal de Luxembourg made an effort to identify them, he was, though the task was undertaken with his consent, relieved that it ended in failure. Such was the conduct of a man who was afterwards to spend his eloquence in the enunciation of the great doctrine that only a parent should have charge of the education of his child.

Comment is needless; for, had we pages to devote to the discussion of this painful subject, we could do scarcely more than record in set phrases the judgment which will rise spontaneously to the lips of all decent and right-minded people. Rousseau stands condemned once and for all by the first principles of common morality, and it would be idle, therefore, to waste our space in formal denunciation. For the sake of understanding the man himself, however, it is important that we should consider his own attitude towards his crime.

His real motive in abandoning his children, one by one, was undoubtedly simple enough. Hardly able to support himself, he recoiled from undertaking the burden of a family. Children, in his own phrase, would have been simply "embarrassments." In such circumstances, plain folk will say, he had no business to encumber himself with a family at all. But Rousseau was a sensualist and a sentimentalist, and this view

of the matter, as it implied the necessity of self-control, the denial of appetite, and a feeling of personal responsibility, was naturally foreign to his mind. The wrong, to begin with, lay not with him, but in unjust laws and the general state of society. "Nature," he wrote to Madame de Francueil, at the time of the birth of his third child, "means us to have children, since the earth produces nourishment for all the world. But it is the rich, it is your class, which steals from mine the bread of my children."[1] Having thus settled the morality of getting a family whether we can support it or not, he found no difficulty in showing, to his own satisfaction, that the plan he had adopted for ridding himself of offspring which "Nature" had kindly sent him, and "Society" cruelly prevented him from caring for, was in the last degree wise and righteous. It is true that he was robbed thereby of the "dear duties" which pertain to fatherhood. But he was willing to make the painful sacrifice for the sake of the children, who would be so much better off at the Foundling than they could be at home! Thus, so eminently "good, sensible, and legitimate" did his policy seem to him to be, that he did not hesitate to speak openly about it to his friends, and was restrained from actual boasting only by consideration of the feelings of Thérèse.[2]

[1] This is the explanatory letter (dated the 20th April 1751) referred to in the *Confessions*, livre viii.

[2] *Confessions*, livre viii. Though domestic morality was laxer in those days than it is now, Rousseau's villainous conduct did not escape the censure of his contemporaries. A palpable hit against him is to be found in Palissot's comedy, *Les Philosophes* (produced in 1760), in which he is represented as one of those philanthropic men who know how to "chérir tout l'univers excepté leurs enfans."

As is shown by the letter to Madame de Francueil, Rousseau at the time it was written was already either deceiving himself, or anxious to deceive others, in regard to the motives of his atrocious conduct—the former being, indeed, as likely as the latter, since self-interest and passion were always powerful to obliterate in his mind the sharpest distinctions of right and wrong. When, years afterwards, he came to deal with this part of his life, he again sought to blur a perfectly clear issue by outbursts of high-flown rhetoric and mawkish sentiment. He asks us to believe that he carefully considered the problem before him judiciously, and in the light of the laws of nature, justice, reason, and that pure religion which has been so much corrupted by men. It was not through hard-heartedness or lack of paternal feeling that he left his children to the chances of a "public education." He had not the means necessary for their proper upbringing; he feared that their mother's kindness might spoil them, and that her relatives might make them as bad as themselves. By sending them to the Foundling, he simply did his duty as father and citizen, for he thus safeguarded them from many possible evils, and put them in the way of becoming honest labourers and good men.[1] Yet, notwithstanding all the argumentative subtlety by which he endeavours to make selfish brutality shine like disinterested virtue, he is fain to acknowledge that his conscience was not always at rest. While writing *Émile*, he became keenly alive to his neglect of paternal responsibilities, and he declares that the famous passage at the beginning of that work, emphasising the supremacy and sanctity of the tie between father and

[1] *Confessions*, livre viii.; *Rêveries: Promenades*, ix. x.

child, was in fact a public confession of his remorse.[1] Yet he has left it on record, in a passage penned long after *Émile*, that if it were necessary he would do again in the matter as he had done, and with even less regret.[2]

To return now to our story. At the time when his *liaison* with Thérèse le Vasseur began, Rousseau, it will be remembered, was hard at work on an opera, and, under the title of *Les Muses Galantes*, this was presently twice performed at aristocratic houses. The Duc de Richelieu even promised for it a representation at Court; but this came to nothing; and it was two years before the piece found its way to the public stage. In the winter of 1745–46, however, Richelieu commissioned its author to refashion the *Princesse de Navarre*,

[1] *Confessions*, livre xii. The passage referred to runs:—"A father, when he has begotten and nourished his children, has thereby performed only a third of his task. . . . He who cannot fulfil the duties of a father has no right to become a father. Neither poverty, nor work, nor social considerations [*respects humains*] can relieve a father of the obligation of nurturing his children, and of bringing them up himself. Readers, believe me, I prophesy to whomsoever has feelings, and neglects such holy duties, that he will long weep bitter tears over his crime, and will never be consoled" (*Émile*, livre i.).

[2] *Rêveries: Promenade*, ix. It may be worth while just to add that the tragic mystery overhanging the after life of Rousseau's children has attracted the attention of writers of fiction, though perhaps not so strongly as might have been supposed. A poem by Sainte-Beuve, in his *Pensées d'Août*, undertakes to give an "imaginary portrait" of one of these hapless creatures; and George Sand once contemplated writing a novel on the same subject (see "Lettres à Sainte-Beuve" in *Revue de Paris*, Dec. 1896). *Vaussore*, by Francis Brune, contains a recent English experiment in this direction. Mention may here be made of the bold but hopeless attempt of Miss Frederika Macdonald (in her *Studies in the France of Voltaire and Rousseau*) to prove that no children were ever born to Rousseau, but that they were simply "invented" by Thérèse in the hope of forcing him to marry her!

an opera of which the libretto was by Voltaire and the music by Rameau. Rousseau gained neither money nor favour by this undertaking, and from overwork and chagrin in connection with it, fell ill; but the incident is noteworthy as the beginning of the relations of the two great leaders of the revolutionary movement in France. About this time, the death of his father brought him unexpectedly a sum of 1500 florins; but as a portion of this was sent to Madame de Warens, then sinking deeper and deeper in financial embarrassments, while another portion was absorbed by the insatiable Madame le Vasseur, Rousseau himself was not greatly benefited by the legacy. It was, indeed, only by picking up a crumb here and a crumb there, that in those days he contrived to live at all. He gave music lessons to Madame de Chenonceaux, and behaved with so much *sagesse* that he did not even make eyes at her, though she was young and pretty. He acted as secretary to Madame Dupin and M. de Francueil, and for a short time held a subordinate position in the department of the latter, who was Receiver-General of Finances, though he soon threw this up on discovering that he was not "born to be a cashier." And he added a little to his funds by copying music.

At the same time—so glaring are the contrasts in Rousseau's career—this struggling Bohemian, who was living in squalor with a hopelessly stupid mistress, was becoming the intimate companion of many men and women of social and literary prominence, nearly all of whom were, in one way or another, to play an unfortunate part in his after life — of Madame d'Épinay and Mdlle. de Bellegarde (later the Comtesse d'Houdetot); of Grimm, d'Holbach, d'Alembert, the

Abbé Condillac, and particularly of Diderot. The *Encyclopédie* had just been started, and at Diderot's invitation he undertook the articles on music. Written in a hurry, these did little for him beyond embroiling him with Rameau. But if here once again an opening which had seemed so promising led to nothing of value, the hour was now at hand when Rousseau was to emerge suddenly from his obscurity, and take his place among the foremost figures of his time.

While the *Encyclopédie* was still in an embryonic state, Diderot got himself into serious trouble by the publication of his famous *Lettres sur les Aveugles*, in which he boldly enunciated the doctrine of relativity in matters of morality and religion, and, worse still, made an uncomplimentary allusion to the mistress of a minister. He was arrested, and confined for a time in the dungeon of Vincennes, but was afterwards removed thence to the château, with permission to wander in the park, on parole, and to receive his friends. Among these was Rousseau, who visited him almost daily, sometimes with Thérèse, sometimes alone.

On one of these expeditions, during the extremely hot summer of 1749, Rousseau carried with him for company along the shadeless, dusty road, a copy of the *Mercure de France*, and as he walked and read, his eye was arrested by an announcement of the question proposed for a prize essay by the Academy of Dijon—"Has the progress of the sciences and arts contributed to the corruption or the purification of morals?" "In a moment," he writes, "I saw another world, and became a new man."[1] "If anything ever resembled sudden inspiration, it was the impulse which came to

[1] *Confessions*, livre viii.

me on that occasion. Instantly, I felt my spirit dazzled by a thousand lights; crowds of vivid ideas presented themselves to me with a force and in a confusion which threw me into irrepressible tumult; my brain began to turn as if with drunkenness. A violent palpitation attacked me, making my bosom heave; unable to breathe while walking, I threw myself under one of the trees in the avenue, and there passed half an hour of such agitation, that, on rising, I found the front of my waistcoat wet with tears, though I had not known that I had been weeping. . . . Had I been able to write but a quarter of what I saw and experienced under that tree, with what clearness would I have set forth the contradictions of our social system; with what power would I have exposed the abuses of our institutions; with what directness would I have shown that man is naturally good, and that it is through these institutions alone that he becomes evil!"[1] He hastened on to Vincennes, in a condition of excitement bordering on delirium; he took Diderot into his confidence; he was urged by him to compete for the prize. "I did so," says Rousseau, "and from that moment was lost. All the misfortunes of the remainder of my life were the inevitable consequences of this moment of bewilderment."[2]

[1] *Quatre Lettres à Malesherbes*, ii.

[2] I have followed Rousseau's own account of this incident, but it is proper to add that it does not correspond with that which has come down to us from other sources. Diderot himself (who wrote, it is true, in a mood of fierce antagonism to his former friend, and who was greatly given to lying) declares that Rousseau consulted him as to which side of the question he should take up (*Vie de Sénèque*, § 66). Morellet reports (on the authority, he says, of Diderot) that Rousseau first proposed to espouse the cause of the arts and sciences, but that Diderot suggested the other line as fresher and more piquant (*Mémoires*, tome i. p. 119).

The essay was written, and, crowned by the Academy of Dijon, created "a kind of revolution in Paris,"[1] just at the time when its author was announcing to Voltaire that he had abandoned all hope of ever rising in the world of letters.[2] Opponents of his thesis that the arts and sciences had brought about the corruption of morals, flew to their rescue—among them, Stanislas, King of Poland; and the time he had to spend in controversy interfered most seriously with the music-copying upon which—since he had now resigned his secretaryship to M. de Francueil and Madame Dupin—he was wholly dependent for his daily bread. Nor was this the worst; for he instantly became the lion of the brilliant and immoral society, whose very life and ideals had, by implication, been included among the objects of his sweeping and parodoxical attack. People became wildly curious to see this strange individual, who wrote with such eloquence and daring originality, who sought no one, and who begged only to be left in quiet, to live his own life according to his own desires. The more he resented their intrusion, the more persistent they grew. His room was invaded by all sorts of fashionable folk, who, on one or another pretext, forced themselves upon him, and frittered away his

This view is also presented by La Harpe (*Lycée* (ed. of 1837), ii. 974) and Marmontel (*Mémoires*, livre vii.). But we may probably take Rousseau's statement as substantially correct, even though we may discount somewhat the alleged "sudden inspiration," which, as likely as not, was introduced for dramatic effect. The choice of sides with him could hardly have been a matter of calculation. When he read the announcement, he may have had no very decided ideas on the subject proposed. But what he wrote was the natural expression of his deepest feelings about man and society.

[1] Grimm, *Correspondence Littéraire*, tome i. p. 108.

[2] Letter of 30th January 1750.

time. Women employed ingenious ruses to get him to dinner. He tried to offend them by adopting the most boorish behaviour. But this only added to their delight. His very churlishness, sharply contrasting with the ceremonial manners of the time, was a new sensation for them, and they enjoyed it.

His social success was completed by the immense vogue of his opera, *Le Devin du Village*, a performance of which before the King at Fontainebleau, in October 1752, brought him the respectable sum of a hundred livres. Word came from His Majesty that he desired to have the composer presented to him, and there was a whisper that the idea of a pension was in the royal mind. But Rousseau, who had attended the representation in his usual careless attire, had the gracelessness and the folly to decline the honour, perhaps from timidity, perhaps from vanity, most probably from a combination of both. The King went on singing, "J'ai perdu mon serviteur"; but nothing more was heard of the pension. The way, however, was now opened for the long-written *Narcisse*, which was produced with fair success before the end of the year.[1]

That a man who had been roundly abusing the arts as immoral should nevertheless devote himself to the writing of operas, was certainly calculated to cause surprise, and Rousseau himself was alive to the inconsistency. But he argued it away with character-

[1] Rousseau himself regarded this production as a failure, and in his preface to the opera, when published, professed himself pleased that it should have failed. He had had the occasion to see how he could stand literary success; for complete self-knowledge he wanted experience of disappointment as well. This is a fine example of his sophistry and inordinate vanity.

istic ingenuity. It is true that arts and sciences have corrupted men; but now that the mischief has been done, it is well to encourage them, for they serve to fill up the idle hours of civilised people, whose depraved tastes would otherwise lead them into even more serious evil.[1] This is throwing a sop to Cerberus with a vengeance! At the same time, Rousseau compromised with himself still further, by undertaking the practical simplification of his own life to the end that it might be brought into harmony with the spirit of the gospel he had been preaching. He gave up gold-facings and white stockings; laid aside his sword; and sold his watch, exclaiming with great joy—"Thank Heaven, I shall no longer need to know the time!" He completed his "sumptuary reform" by conquering (with the aid of Thérèse's brother, who stole his shirts) his "passion for fine linen." Thus he set himself resolutely to uproot from his heart everything that depended simply upon social convention, that he might cultivate there the more sedulously the things which were good and reasonable in themselves.[2] All this sounds a trifle ridiculous, but it has to be mentioned, since it is at this point that Rousseau places his definite break with society.[3]

But his *Discours* had made him a man of letters, whether he would or would not, and it had given him such a revelation of his own powers, that, whatever his theory of literature might be, he could hardly be expected to lay aside the pen. Of a great teacher of the last generation it used to be said, that he preached the doctrine of silence in thirty volumes. If Rousseau

[1] Preface to *Narcisse*.
[2] *Confessions*, livre viii.
[3] *Rêveries: Promenade*, iii.

employed art to discredit art, his inconsistency is not unparalleled.

Le Devin du Village appeared just when the famous quarrel between the *coin du roi* and the *coin de la reine*, or the partisans of the French and Italian schools of music, was at its height. Grimm and Diderot had both been in the fray, and by his *Lettre sur la Musique Française*, which deeply wounded the national pride, Rousseau now "set fire to the four corners of Paris."[1] So high did feeling run on the matter, that, according to his own declaration, he narrowly escaped the Bastille, and went for a time in fear of his life.

A more important work soon engaged his attention. The Academy of Dijon proposed the question—"What is the origin of inequality among men, and is it authorised by natural law?" Struck by the grandeur of the subject, he retired with Thérèse to St. Germain, and there meditated upon it in the solitude of the forest. Though his *Discours sur l'Inégalité* failed to gain the prize, it added greatly to his reputation in the intellectual world and to his success in society.

Between the composition of this essay and its publication, Rousseau made a journey to Geneva, accompanied by Thérèse. At Lyons he turned aside to visit Madame de Warens, now dragging out a miserable existence in poverty and wretchedness. Poor mamma! His heart was broken at the sight of her. "The only bit of jewellery that was left to her, a little ring, she took from her finger and put it on that of Thérèse, who at once returned it, kissing the noble hand and watering it with her tears. Ah, that was the moment for me to pay off the debt I owed her. I

[1] Grimm, *Correspondence Littéraire*, tome i. p. 92.

ought to have left all to follow her, to attach myself to her to the last hour, to share her fate, whatever it might be. I did nothing. . . . I sighed over her, but I did not follow her. Of all the remorse I have felt in my life, this is the keenest and most permanent." Such is his characteristic outburst of sentiment. Eight years afterwards, "mamma" died in a hovel.

At Geneva he received a regular ovation, was filled with patriotic and republican fervour; and, ashamed of being excluded from citizenship by reason of his alien religious creed, decided to return openly to Protestantism. Whether at bottom his reconversion was anything more than a bit of gusty sentimentalism, as meaningless in its own way as the "bandit's act" of years before, when he had forsaken the faith of his fathers, is more than doubtful. But Geneva was satisfied, and he was restored to his civic rights.

He returned to Paris after four months' stay in his native city, and on the publication of his *Discours sur l'Inégalité*, in the summer of 1755, he dedicated it, in a strain of bombastic eulogy, to the Republic of Geneva. The "Magnificent Council" responded with a polite but chilly acknowledgment; and upon this he abandoned the idea he had been entertaining of settling for good in his boyhood's home. About the same time, Voltaire took up his residence near Geneva, and Rousseau at once foresaw what would be the result—the witty Frenchman would soon introduce into the simple republic the tone, air, morals, which rendered Paris so loathsome.[1] When he was offered

[1] *Confessions*, livre viii. It must be remembered, however, that at the time Rousseau was writing to Voltaire with marked friendliness and admiration.

the city librarianship at a salary of 1200 francs, he declined.

None the less, though Geneva had lost its attractions for him, he had made up his mind to fly from Paris, the life and atmosphere of which were fast becoming unbearable. During all the years he had passed in the great city, he had never ceased to pine for the solitude and peace of the country. His health had again broken down; his literary successes had caused fierce jealousies; men who flattered him to his face, defamed him behind his back; even Grimm and Diderot, he believed, were no longer true to him, despite their expressions of friendship. Already the black shadow of mistrust, which was to cast so terrible a gloom over his after years, was beginning to darken his mind. To escape from the metropolis became his fixed purpose. Morally and physically he craved the change.

The opportunity he sought came to him while he was still hesitating about the possibility of returning to Geneva. One day he was walking with Madame d'Épinay, with whom he had long been on intimate terms, on her estate on the borders of the forest of Montmorency, when they came upon a pretty little fruit-garden, and a dilapidated lodge, called the Hermitage. He was enraptured with the solitary and charming spot. "Ah, madam," he exclaimed, "what a delicious place. This is the very refuge for me!" On making a second visit with her, some time afterwards, he found that she had had the old lodge pulled down, and a cottage exactly suited to his own household built in its place. "My bear," she said—this was her jocular nickname for him—"there is your refuge. You yourself chose it. Friendship offers it to you. I hope it

will banish from your mind the cruel idea of going away from me." And she added a promise of financial help.

Despite his constant rhodomontades concerning poverty and personal freedom, Rousseau had more than once shown himself willing to accept assistance under conditions strongly savouring of dependence; and one could therefore hardly have been prepared for the explosion which followed this kindly intended proposal. He wrote to Madame d'Épinay that it had "frozen his soul," and that she little understood her own interests in seeking to make a valet of him; though he concluded by expressing his readiness to listen to her if she would only remember that neither he nor his feelings were for sale. But for the lady's tact and patience a quarrel would almost certainly have ensued. As it was, however, Rousseau ultimately consented to avail himself of her offer upon his own conditions. He established himself in his new home early in April, 1756, rejoicing to exchange the mad rush and excitement of the city for the quiet woods and fields; while his acquaintances in Paris did not fail to make merry over his extraordinary tastes, and to prophesy that he would very soon be glad enough to get back to civilisation.[1]

[1] In the above paragraphs I have supplemented Rousseau's own account of the negotiations for the Hermitage by that contained in Madame d'Épinay's *Mémoires*. The two narratives disagree in various particulars, but it would be impossible to discuss their differences in the space here at our disposal.

CHAPTER IV

The Hermitage and Mont-Louis (1756–1762)

When Rousseau settled at the Hermitage, at the age of forty-four, it was with the feeling that he was now about to enter upon a way of life in which he would find the peace and happiness he had long sought in vain. His financial outlook was indeed far from satisfactory. He had no income beyond what he was himself able to earn; and though his past successes might easily have led him to turn to literature for support, he recoiled with horror from the thought of becoming a professional penman, believing, perhaps rightly, that the necessity of producing for money would prove absolutely fatal to his genius. But a couple of thousand francs which remained to him from the *Devin du Village* and other writings, sufficed for immediate needs, and his business of copying music, if neither brilliant nor particularly lucrative, could at least be depended upon as a certainty; while for the rest, as his household consisted of three persons only, whose tastes were very simple, his general expenses could not in the nature of things be large. Concerning practical matters, therefore, his mind was quite at ease.

For some days he abandoned himself entirely to the

delirious joy of finding himself once more in the country. His first thought was, not that of setting his cottage in order, but of planning his promenades; and there was not a path, not a hedge, not a nook or corner, about his dwelling which he did not at once explore. The more he saw of his surroundings, the more delighted he was with them; and though his retreat was only a few miles from Paris, it was so peaceful and rustic that he felt himself transported in fancy to the ends of the world. As the weeks passed on, his heart expanded, his whole nature showed the benefit of the change. When any friend wrote to him of what was happening in the metropolis, he merely thanked Heaven the more warmly that he was no longer condemned to live in that centre of discord and crime. Little by little, his bitterness of spirit left him. No longer mingling with men, he ceased to despise them; no longer in constant touch with evil, he lost his hatred of it. He overcame his "bilious humour"—his *sæva indignatio*, and grew calm, complaisant, timid—the Jean Jacques of other days.[1]

Yet even here trouble dogged his steps. Increasing misunderstanding between himself and Madame le Vasseur—the third inmate of his home—was a perennial cause of nervous irritation. From Thérèse herself he now learned things about her mother, her meanness, rapacity, and deceit, of which previously he had had no suspicion; he discovered, too, to his immense astonishment and disgust, that Diderot and Grimm had for some time past been using their influence against him with both the women of his household. He might pardon Madame le Vasseur's greed; he could

[1] *Confessions*, livre ix.

not forgive her dissimulation; and considering that he himself had rescued her from poverty, and given her shelter and bread, he justly regarded her behaviour as ingratitude of the basest kind. In defiance of his specific directions that no one should be admitted to the Hermitage, various members of the shameless family swarmed in upon his solitude, the moment his back was turned; and all the time, Madame le Vasseur was doing her best to alienate her daughter from him, and running up debts in Thérèse's name, which Rousseau of course had to discharge. Nor was this all. Now that the retirement of the country had thrown himself and Thérèse more continually upon one another's society—now that absence of outer influences shut them in, day by day and week by week, wholly to themselves, he began in his *solitude à deux* to be aware of the distance which separated them, and to regret that he had not, in the earlier years of their *liaison*, persevered in the task, however hopeless it had seemed, of cultivating her mind. They could not everlastingly talk of domestic affairs; but beyond these matters, and matters such as these, they had no ideas in common, since other subjects of conversation, which interested him, lay altogether beyond her reach. He was still certain of her heart, and that, in a way, was enough. But the drop of bitterness was in his cup of joy.

Nevertheless, he was, on the whole, happy; and despite domestic infelicities — despite the importunity of Parisian acquaintances, who every now and then invaded his retreat — he renewed for a while the serenity of his youth at Les Charmettes. His days were divided according to fixed rule — the mornings

being devoted to his music copying; the afternoons to long rambles, during which—for his habit always was to compose out of doors—his literary work was done. Wandering at will, with pencil and notebook always at hand, he gave himself up to reverie, allowing his ideas to shape themselves in his mind, turning his sentences over and over, and now and then pausing to jot down a thought or phrase. It was under these conditions alone that real composition was possible to him; and when adverse weather confined him to the house, he made no attempt to pursue his train of reflection, but spent his time over the compilation of a *Dictionnaire de Musique*, which he kept on the stocks as a mechanical task for rainy days.

When Rousseau settled at the Hermitage, he had various works already in mind—a study of political institutions, based upon personal observations made in Venice; a treatise on the relations of environment to conduct, which was to have been entitled *La morale sensitive, ou le matérialisme du sage*, and the notes for which were lost (or, as he says, stolen[1]) on his flight from Montmorency; and a long-meditated system of education. These gave him plenty to think about during his rambles; but in the end the last-named was the only one which saw the light in the form contemplated. In addition to these, he undertook, at the suggestion of the Abbé de Mably and Madame Dupin, to make and edit a series of extracts from the writings of the Abbé de Saint-Pierre.[2] On examining

[1] *Confessions*, livre xii.

[2] Charles Irénée Castel, Abbé de Saint-Pierre, who died in Paris in 1743, was a voluminous writer on social and political questions, and though many of his ideas were regarded as visionary, he deserves a

his material, he found that, though the Abbé's writings were marked by high ideals and true enthusiasm for humanity, his philosophy was fatally marred by the underlying sophism that people "are governed by their lights rather than by their passions." For this reason, among others, he finally abandoned his laborious and thankless task. All that remains of it will be found in the extracts from the *Projet de paix perpetuelle* and the *Polysynodie*, with Rousseau's editorial *jugements* upon them.

It was during the early days of his residence at the Hermitage that Rousseau first came into collision with Voltaire. The occasion was the great Lisbon earthquake of 1755. The news of that appalling disaster had swept like wildfire over Europe, and men everywhere had been struck dumb with horror and alarm—the frivolous checked for the moment in their folly—the thoughtful and religious shaken to the very foundations of their faith. The catastrophe was indeed one to play havoc with the easy-going optimism which had marked so much of early eighteenth-century philosophy, and which had found its most popular expression in the brilliant couplets of the *Essay on Man*. A great and fair city, with a population of perhaps 170,000 souls, had in six minutes been reduced to a heap of ruins; 15,000 people had perished outright; as many more had been fatally injured; and, to add the last touch of tragic effect to the occurrence, the calamity had taken place in the early morning of the 1st November—All Saints' Day—when the thirty churches which had been

place, as Rousseau realised, among the progressive thinkers of his time. Rousseau had met him at Madame Dupin's, and held his memory in great esteem.

destroyed, were filled with worshippers, praising God for His Fatherly kindness or invoking His blessing and care. It is no wonder that the tidings of such a disaster should have gone "horribly crashing through the thoughts of all mortals,"[1] and that even dogmatists, ever ready with paper-explanations of the mysterious performances of Providence, should have been staggered by the shock. In a well-known passage in his *Autobiography*, Goethe has recorded the impression which the news made upon him, then a child of six:—"God, the Creator and Preserver of Heaven and Earth, whom the first article of our creed declared to be so wise and benignant, had not displayed paternal solicitude in thus consigning just and unjust alike to the same destruction. In vain my young mind strove to resist this conclusion. It was impossible—the more so, as the wise and religious themselves could not agree upon the view to be taken of the event." And at the same time that the most famous German of the generation to come was thus, on the very threshold of his life, brought suddenly face to face with the eternal riddle of the cosmic process, the most famous Frenchman of the century, already well advanced in years, was pouring out words of burning question and reproof — words in which for once there is no note of flippancy or cynicism, but which literally quiver with emotion almost too strong for adequate expression. "Direz-vous," cried Voltaire, to those who still were bold enough to indulge in platitudes about the hand of God in human affairs—

"Direz-vous, en voyant cet amas de victimes—
Dieu s'est vengé, leur mort est le prix de leurs crimes?
Quel crime, quelle faute, ont commis ces enfans

[1] Carlyle, *Frederick the Great*, bk. xvi. chap. xv.

Sur le sein maternel écrasés et sanglants ?
Lisbonne qui n'est plus, eût-elle plus de vices
Que Londres, que Paris, plongés dans les délices ?
Lisbonne est abimée ; et l'on danse à Paris ! "

Say what we may of his theology, we must all think the more kindly of Voltaire for his splendid and passionate outburst — perhaps the most genuinely human thing to be found in all his voluminous writings. A copy of this poem reached Rousseau in due course — sent, he imagined, by the author himself, though the supposition was incorrect; and the hermit of Montmorency sat down and addressed a letter of reply to the brilliant, wealthy, successful man of the world, reproving him for his lack of faith in the Divine government of the universe. It angered him to see a man overwhelmed with prosperity and glory declaiming against the evils of a life which was, at all events, bright enough for him, and doing his best to fill the minds of his less fortunate fellow-creatures with unrest and despair. Thus inspired, his *Lettre sur la Providence*, afterwards printed without his permission, was a vigorous and eloquent argument—in large measure in the way of an amplification or restatement of the familiar commonplaces of the *Essay on Man* — in favour of an optimistic interpretation of evil. Voltaire himself had been an adherent of Pope's philosophy, but it satisfied him no longer: — "If Pope had been in Lisbon," he asked, "would he have dared to say 'All is well'?" It was Rousseau's aim to show that Pope was right in his view of life, and Voltaire wrong in discarding that view. God is perfect, he insists, and this world is therefore perfect because it must be so; with that position all philosophising must begin and

end. If we cannot regard such reasoning as effective, it is only fair to Rousseau to say that he did as well as any one could be expected to do with the task he had taken in hand. His really important contribution to the discussion was in the form of a corollary from the first principles of his social theory. We blame God and Nature for the destruction of Lisbon. Should we not rather blame ourselves? Nature did not build those 20,000 houses, six or seven storeys high. They were man's doing. If men had been contented to remain scattered about the country, in lightly constructed habitations, as in savage times, the evil complained of would have been inconsiderable—perhaps there would have been no evil at all. Clearly we cannot expect Nature to pay attention to our absurd inventions, or to stop sending earthquakes when we have chosen to herd ourselves together in cities. And having thus presented the Lisbon disaster as an illustration, on a gigantic scale, of the whole bad business of civilisation, he closed his epistle upon the personal note, by drawing a striking contrast between himself, "obscure, poor, suffering from a malady beyond remedy," yet finding "all well," and Voltaire, crowned with worldly success, and railing against life and Providence while enjoying their richest satisfactions.

Voltaire briefly acknowledged this letter from his "dear philosopher," in a tone of friendly badinage, but, on the ground that he had a niece ill in his house, and was in poor health himself, he claimed the privilege of postponing a reply. The reply came later, not addressed to Rousseau, nor aimed directly at his argument, but still a reply. It was that masterpiece of pungent wit and satire, *Candide*. "Of this,"

says Rousseau, "I cannot speak, because I have never read it."[1]

A far more important work than any he had as yet produced was now to engage Rousseau's attention; and as the genetic history of this is closely bound up with certain extraordinary emotional experiences of his own in the days immediately preceding his correspondence with Voltaire, we have for the moment to turn back a little in our narrative.

From the domestic anxieties and distractions which, as we have seen, attended his early life at the Hermitage, he sought a perilous relief in the world of the imagination, to the potent spell of which he yielded with a kind of delirious joy. In one of the most striking passages of self-revelation to be found even in the *Confessions*, he has described for us the visionary extravagances to which he was wont to abandon himself, day after day, as in the soft June weather he wandered alone about the woods, and listened to the music of the nightingale and the murmur of the brooks. He peopled his solitude with the entrancing forms of all the beautiful women he had ever known, from the maidens whose fair faces he still vividly recalled from the now far-off days of youth, to the courtesan who had played her part in his residence at Venice. Thus he surrounded himself with a seraglio of houris, who set his blood burning and his brain reeling in fierce intoxication; and so powerful was the hold that these chimerical creatures had upon

[1] *Confessions*, livre ix. In considering *Candide* as one sign of a general reaction against the superficial optimism of the first half of the eighteenth century, it is interesting to note the coincidence that in the same year there appeared, in England, another remarkable didactic story having fundamentally the same significance, though the work of a man who abhorred Voltaire and all he stood for—the *Rasselas* of Dr. Johnson.

him, that he recoiled with absolute horror from the real world of flesh and blood. We cannot regard this prolonged imaginative ecstasy as anything short of an attack of erotomania, and we may perhaps even see in it the first distinct indication of the serious mental disturbances by which we must explain many things in his later life which otherwise would remain inexplicable. The delirium at length ended, as might have been foreseen, in complete physical collapse, which for a time cured him of his "fantastic amours," and the composition of his letter to Voltaire further helped to turn the current of his thoughts into a healthier channel. But when, after a period of confinement to the house, he again began his lonely promenades, his imagination once more assumed the mastery. He now found pleasure in picturing to himself love and friendship in the persons of two beautiful and emotional girls, to one of whom he gave a lover, whom the other held in tender affection, yet without misunderstanding or jealousy arising in consequence of such relationship. Little by little he identified himself with this lover, whom none the less he endowed with the youth no longer his, and virtues he had never possessed; he placed them in the landscape still dearest to him, Vévai, the birthplace of "mamma"; and as his dramatic fancies took greater and greater coherence, he began to put on paper, at first with no definite plan, scattered letters between friend and friend, and lover and mistress, in which was sketched the passionate story of their lives. This was the germ of *Julie*, or *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, as it is more commonly called. When the winter weather kept him indoors, he found himself, despite all efforts to

banish them, still haunted by the charming figures he had evoked; and, giving himself up finally to their spell, he began to shape out of his day-dreams a sort of romance. He was indeed ashamed of his weakness; with the severe principles he had so loudly proclaimed to the world, and the austere morality he had set himself to teach, there was something at once absurd and humiliating to him in the idea that he was about to contribute to a class of literature which he had so unqualifiedly condemned. But the romance continued to grow, notwithstanding all his scruples, which were presently set at rest by the conception of a high philosophic purpose in his work. During that winter he wrote and transcribed in fair copy the first two parts of *Julie*, using only the most expensive paper for the purpose, since nothing was too good for the beautiful girls of whom, like a second Pygmalion, he had become enamoured. And every evening, seated by the fire, he read from his manuscript to the two inmates of his home and companions of his life—poor, stupid Thérèse, and her sordid and selfish mother. What a picture the scene calls up! Thérèse only wept; Madame le Vasseur contented herself with repeating at every pause—"Monsieur, cela est bien beau!"

Return of spring brought a recurrence of his erotic transports, and with them a fresh romance of his own, which was destined to blend with that which was unfolding itself on paper. Some years before, as we have noted, he had made the acquaintance of the cousin and sister-in-law of Madame d'Épinay, then Mdlle. de Bellegarde,[1] who was now, with disastrous

[1] The relation was a double one, since Mdlle. La Live de Bellegarde was cousin of Madame d'Épinay and sister of that lady's husband.

consequences, to come back into his life. She had in the meantime married the Comte d'Houdetot, a mean and worthless man, who, having a passion for another woman himself, neglected his wife, and cared little about the *liaison* which she presently formed with M. de Saint-Lambert.[1] That spring, her husband and her lover being both away, she had taken up her abode at Eaubonne, in the Montmorency valley, and, at the request of Saint-Lambert himself, she visited Rousseau at the Hermitage. She came on horseback, and in man's attire; and much as he generally disliked such masquerades, he was at once taken with her romantic charm. "Drunk" he had been "with an objectless love;" he now found an object for it. He saw his own Julie in her, and endowing her with all the perfections of his creation, he made her instantly the idol of his heart.

She was not beautiful—as Rousseau admits; her features were poor, and her face pitted with the small-pox. But her gaiety, gentleness, frankness, and wit, made her a universal favourite. She had many accomplishments, and her character was "angelic."[2] Rousseau was not blind to the absurdity of nourishing

[1] Long afterwards, d'Houdetot wittily said—"My wife and I had the vocation of fidelity—only there was a misunderstanding." Saint-Lambert later won great fame by his poem *Les Saisons* (in imitation of Thomson). Of this work Voltaire declared that it was the only production of the century which would pass down to posterity—a pronouncement which well illustrates George Eliot's remark, that of all forms of mistake, prophecy is the most gratuitous.

[2] As one of her friends (Madame d'Allard, in her *Anecdotes pour servir de suite aux Mémoires de Madame d'Épinay*) afterwards said: "It will be a consolation to plain women to learn that Madame d'Houdetot, who was exceedingly plain, owed it to her wit, and particularly her charming character, that she was so well and faithfully loved."

at his age, and against all his declared sentiments and principles, an ardent passion for a woman who was not only already married (that was a minor matter), but whose heart was preoccupied by another love; and for a time he entertained the characteristic idea that, if he could not become her lover, he would be her mentor and moral guide. But it was useless to argue and struggle, since every time he turned his mind to Julie, he found that the woman of his radiant visions had merged into the woman with whom he now held converse in the flesh. He tried to think of Julie, and he thought of Madame d'Houdetot.

Rousseau's account of this last of the great passions by which he was shaken, is amazing in the story itself, amazing in its minute dissection of impulse and feeling, amazing in the sophisticating rhetoric with which every incident is overlaid. To what extent he was able to twist motives to suit his purposes, is shown by the fact that he covered his conduct with the contention that, as there was no chance of his winning Madame d'Houdetot away from her paramour, he could frankly declare his own love to her, inasmuch as by so doing, while he would never move her, he would greatly relieve his own heart. The way thus cleared, he felt free to indulge his madness without hesitation or misgiving. Now, for once, he proclaims, he knew love in all its energy and all its fury—such love as he had never experienced, even for "mamma" or Thérèse! He even hints that the strange agitations, tremblings, convulsive starts, and sudden failings of the heart, to which he was subject at this time, were but outward and physical signs of a tremendous moral upheaval. And yet he asks us to believe that he loved this woman

too much even to wish to possess her. On Madame d'Houdetot's side it is not easy to understand how this extraordinary suit was regarded. Even if she was originally moved with compassion for a man she appears to have thought crazy,[1] she must have found a certain perilous pleasure in his society, for it is quite clear that she foolishly encouraged him in behaviour which was discreditable to both. None the less, through all the long months of their sentimental intercourse, and notwithstanding their delicious promenades and the intimate *tête-à-têtes*, during which their tears and sighs mingled in silent rapture, she seems —according to her own notions of fidelity—to have remained faithful to her absent lover. She accepted the fantastic offerings of her new devotee, but the image of Saint-Lambert never faded from her memory.

The two made no secret of their intimacy, which was soon the common talk of their friends and acquaintances; and this publicity in time brought Madame d'Houdetot to her senses. On her return from a visit to Paris she told Rousseau that Saint-Lambert had learned of what had been going on between them, and that she herself had made a clean breast to him of the whole matter. With rare sagacity, Saint-Lambert took the course of treating the affair as of no importance — a method well calculated to wound a sensitive rival's *amour propre*. He behaved to Rousseau "coldly," but still "in a friendly way," and he brought Madame d'Houdetot to dine with him at the Hermitage, on which occasion the lovers greatly irritated their host by the open

[1] Letter of Grimm to Madame d'Épinay, in *Mémoires de Madame d'Épinay*, ii. 305.

display of their affection and happiness. Nor did this quite complete the humiliation of that dreadful day, for when, after dinner, Rousseau read to Saint-Lambert his letter to Voltaire about the earthquake, Saint-Lambert went to sleep and actually snored. After her lover's departure again, Rousseau found Madame d'Houdetot much changed towards him, and—though the statement seems almost incredible—he had the tactlessness and the indecency to complain about this to Saint-Lambert himself. Saint-Lambert replied, expressing "esteem and amity," and, inspired by this letter with "sentiments of duty and a horror of perfidy," Rousseau decided to see in the woman of his adoration henceforth nothing more than a friend and the mistress of a friend. Thus ended his personal relations with Madame d'Houdetot—relations which (with his usual desperate confusion of feeling concerning all matters of morality) he regarded to the end, "before Heaven," as having been characterised by "rare and painful sacrifices made by both to duty, honour, love, and friendship." [1]

One most unfortunate result of this episode was that it led to a rupture between Rousseau and the friend to whose kindness he was indebted for his Montmorency retreat. Madame d'Épinay was not unnaturally annoyed that her sister-in-law should have made herself the subject of common gossip, and, though not in love with Rousseau herself (having in Grimm a lover of her own), was probably piqued that he had abandoned her society for that of another woman. It is extremely difficult to disentangle the rights and wrongs of the quarrel which ensued. Rousseau, for his part, roundly

[1] *Confessions*, livre ix.

accuses her of treachery of the basest description—of writing to Saint-Lambert an exaggerated account of what was taking place; of stimulating Thérèse's jealousy; of trying to steal Madame d'Houdetot's letters to him. According to Madame d'Épinay, on the other hand, it was Thérèse herself who wrote the anonymous letter bringing the affair to Saint-Lambert's attention. A sharp interchange of letters followed. Then Rousseau's anger passed away, and he went to Madame d'Épinay, who—if we are to accept his version—fell on his neck and burst into tears. Her own account is much less dramatic; but the main thing is that a temporary reconciliation was effected between them.[1]

But this is only a small part of the pitiful story of Rousseau's quarrels. Serious misunderstandings were now arising between himself and two men whom, in the early days of his Paris life, he had reckoned as his closest friends, though a certain amount of strain had already come into his relationships with them—Diderot and Grimm.

When Rousseau went to the Hermitage, Diderot had remonstrated with him about the matter, as other

[1] Madame d'Épinay's letters to Rousseau are given in her *Mémoires* in a form considerably different from that in which they appear in the *Confessions;* but it is now known that his transcripts are (save in a few verbal details) correct, and hers falsified (see Streckeisen-Moultou, *op. cit.*, ii. 450; and Ritter, "Nouvelles recherches sur les Confessions," etc., in *Zeitschrift fur neufranzösischen Sprache*, ii. 326–327). This fact may lead us to give a preference we should otherwise hardly have extended to Rousseau's general narrative of the whole of this complicated business. It must not, however, be forgotten that he wrote a dozen years or so after the event, and that here, as elsewhere, he is under suspicion of sacrificing truth to literary effect. In neither record can we hope to find absolute accuracy.

friends had done, and though he had not resented this at the time, he became greatly annoyed when he found that he was not allowed to remain in peaceful enjoyment of his solitude. It seemed to him, naturally enough, that he had every right to live his life in his own way, and he regarded the efforts of those who, like Diderot, kept on tormenting him to return to Paris, as the unwarrantable interference of outsiders in his private affairs. In the mood of irritation thus engendered, he was ready to detect in a chance sentence in an essay appended to *Le Fils Naturel*[1]—"Il n'y a que le méchant qui soit seul"—a covert allusion to himself. This angered him; and when, on the top of it, Diderot wrote strongly urging him not to winter in the country, out of consideration for Madame le Vasseur's health, he was ready to explode. He could never afterwards understand why he had been guilty of the folly of treating Diderot seriously, instead of laughing at him, as he deserved; but it is a long while before the humour of some things dawns upon us; and instead of laughing, Rousseau was furious. Some violent correspondence followed, and then the storm seemed to subside. But by this time his solitary life, his erotic visions, his fierce passion for Madame d'Houdetot, and the reaction which ensued, had had their effect upon him, and Rousseau's whole nature was unhinged. He grew morbidly suspicious, even of those who had been his friends; he began to regard himself as an object of general antipathy; he fancied that the *philosophes* of Paris, to whose habits and

[1] This essay—*De la poésie dramatique*—is a most valuable document in the history of the eighteenth-century theatre, particularly in connection with the evolution of the so-called Bourgeois Tragedy.

principles his own life was a standing reproach, were banded together to bring him to ruin. It became a settled conviction with him that a vast conspiracy was taking shape against him among the *literati* of the metropolis, headed by the powerful group which he called the *coterie holbachienne*. And thus the fire smouldered and smouldered, in readiness presently to burst into flame.

Fresh trouble arose through Rousseau's relations with Grimm. This man, a German, had come young to Paris, as tutor in the family of the Comte de Schomberg, a position which he soon afterwards exchanged for the scarcely more lucrative one of reader to the Duke of Saxe-Gotha. Then he had met Rousseau, and their common love of music had led to an intimacy which was strengthened when they found themselves fighting side by side, in the *querelle des buffons*, in the cause of the Italian school. It was largely through Rousseau's influence that Grimm obtained an entrance into the literary society of Paris; after which his worldly progress was rapid and continuous. This first kindness, according to the *Confessions*, he repaid with arrogance and perfidy—even to the extent, as Rousseau believed, of attempting to rob him of his means of livelihood in copying music. There was, in fact, no real bond of union between the two men; and temperamental antipathy soon bred friction, which was increased by many trifling disagreements. Grimm's dandyism annoyed Rousseau; Rousseau seemed to Grimm little better than a fool. Already, when he went to Montmorency, Rousseau felt that Grimm was growing cold towards him; and though he did not then know that Grimm and Diderot together were

making the Le Vasseurs a yearly allowance of 400 livres, he suspected them (and with ample reason) of underhand meddling with his concerns, and fully believed that they were busily spreading news of his conduct with regard to his children, and using Madame le Vasseur as a spy upon his actions.

Among other social advantages Grimm owed to Rousseau was an introduction to Madame d'Épinay. It happened that she was then fretting under the infidelity of her former *amant*, M. de Francueil, into whose place Grimm consolingly stepped. His instinctive dislike of Rousseau caused him from the outset to object to his intimacy with Madame d'Épinay, and it was against his strongly worded advice that she installed her "dear bear" in the Hermitage. So with the passing years matters went from bad to worse. An attempt to bring about a reconciliation ended in a flurry of fine speeches, and the immediate recrudescence of the old difficulties in an exacerbated form. Diderot, with all his faults, was not a man to bear malice, but his feelings towards Rousseau were constantly embittered by the influence of Grimm. Then Madame d'Épinay fell ill, and all of a sudden decided to go to Geneva for the advice of the famous physician, Tronchin.[1] There is not the slightest reason to suppose that she ever thought of Rousseau's accompanying her; on the contrary, it seems evident that she was getting tired of a man whom she now epigrammatically described as "a moral dwarf mounted on stilts." But

[1] Rousseau hints that the cause of this mysterious journey was the lady's desire to get away from Paris in order to conceal the results of her *liaison* with Grimm. This has been repeated by many writers, but has been proved an unfounded charge. See *Dernières années de Madame d'Épinay*, by Perey and Maugras.

once more Diderot saw fit to intervene. He wrote Rousseau a maladroit letter, in which he told him that it was his plain duty to go with his benefactress on her long journey. This was more than Rousseau could stand; a violent correspondence brought the quarrel to a head; and the unhappy man passed rapidly from the anguish of disillusion to the frenzy of hate. A stormy interview, which took place between him and Diderot early in December 1757, left on the latter's agitated mind the feeling that he was haunted by a damned soul. "May I never see that man again," he wrote to Grimm; "he makes me believe in devils and hell."

Rousseau in the meantime informed Madame d'Épinay that, in the circumstances, he could no longer stay at the Hermitage, adding, however, that his friends advised him not to leave there till spring. To this blundering remark the lady curtly answered that if he felt he ought to go, she was astonished that he should allow other people to restrain him. This unexpected reply threw him into confusion—it was tantamount to a dismissal, and he did not know whither to turn. But fortune, as usual, came to his rescue. The *procureur-fiscal* of the Prince de Conti, hearing of his trouble, offered him a little cottage at Mont-Louis. The transfer was quickly made; and while he and Thérèse took possession of their new quarters, he packed Madame le Vasseur off to Paris, with the announcement that, though he was willing to make her an allowance, the time had come when he could no longer tolerate her under his roof.

The few years spent at Mont-Louis were, from the point of view of literary achievement, the most important of Rousseau's career. His first production after settling there was the famous *Lettre à d'Alem-*

bert sur son article Génève, dans la septième volume de l'Encyclopédie — more commonly known as his *Lettre sur les Spectacles.* D'Alembert had advocated the establishment of a theatre in the Puritanic city. Rousseau entered an eloquent protest against the proposal, basing his argument upon the contaminating influence of the arts in general, and vigorously declaiming in particular against the stage. Though a personal reference to Diderot, in the preface, was generally reprehended, this letter scored a great success, and gave rise to a heated paper-warfare, in which, naturally enough, the literary world was on the whole against Rousseau, and the religious public just as naturally on his side. D'Alembert himself treated Rousseau with marked courtesy; but there were others who lost their temper. Among these was Voltaire, who was at that time busily engaged in an attempt to introduce the theatre into Geneva, and who regarded his own dramatic work as his chief title-deed to fame. "Has Jean Jacques become a father of the Church?" he asked, greatly irritated to find a writer whose power and influence he was bound, however reluctantly, to acknowledge, making common cause with the Jansenists against him, in an enterprise on which he had set his heart. Nothing further came for the moment out of this fresh passage of arms between the two men. But when, a couple of years later, Rousseau addressed to him a frenzied letter full of sweeping accusations and openly expressed hatred, Voltaire's anger burst its bounds.[1] Henceforth he lost

[1] The prime object of this letter was to declare the writer's innocence of any part in the surreptitious publication of his epistle to Voltaire upon the Lisbon earthquake.

no occasion of manifesting his antipathy towards and contempt for a man whom he described as fool, arch-madman, fanatic, scoundrel, mountebank, and by other names with which we will not here befoul our pages.

In the winter following the issue of the letter to d'Alembert, Rousseau finished *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, which, published in 1760, at once took the world by storm. Every one in Paris read it, wept over it, talked about it; the booksellers found it impossible to meet the demand for copies. "Women," Rousseau declares, "were so intoxicated with both the book and its author, that there were very few, even in the highest circles, of whom I could not have made the conquest if I had tried;" one great lady, chancing to open it just before starting for a carnival ball, became so absorbed that she forgot all about her engagement, and read till morning. With the publication of this romance, Rousseau reached the zenith of his social and literary success; and before the great excitement had well subsided, he brought out two other works which were destined to make an even more profound and lasting impression on the thought of the time—the *Contrat Social* (an offshoot from the now abandoned *Institutions Politiques*) and *Émile*.

Rousseau strives hard to convince us that, though his former friends had turned against him, and his condition of health gave him constant cause for alarm, he was all this time contented with his lot and happy in his new surroundings. The kindness of the Maréchal de Luxembourg and his wife, who had their summer house near Mont-Louis, and of Malesherbes, to whom in 1762 he addressed his first lengthy document of

self-defence,[1] did much to fill up the void left by the associates he had lost. But with the appearance of *Émile*, in 1762, the period of comparative quiet came to a sudden and violent close. Those were days when the publication of works dealing with religious and political questions was attended with serious personal risk, and when a writer's only chance of escaping the Bastille or banishment lay either in denying (as Voltaire, Diderot, and many others did) the authorship of his own books, or in having his productions printed abroad. Rousseau himself was fully alive to the possible consequences of *Émile*, and friends to whom he read from the manuscript the *Profession de foi du Vicaire Savoyard*, which forms an important part of it, gave him ample warning of what was likely to come to pass. His own intention had therefore been to issue the work in Holland only; but under pressure from Madame de Luxembourg and Malesherbes, he arranged for a French edition as well. The results were such as had been foreseen. The Parliament of Paris, then engaged in an attack upon the Jesuits, and glad enough to have an opportunity of proclaiming its orthodoxy, at once pounced upon the book, ordered it to be burned, and decreed the arrest of its author. News was secretly brought him, in the middle of the night of the 8th–9th June, of his immediate danger, while at the same time he was given to understand that his friends had obtained a certain grace for him, and that, should he elect to fly, he would not be pursued.

[1] Rousseau had already the *Confessions* in mind, but as ill-health and preoccupation with other matters prevented him at the time from devoting himself to what he knew would be a long and difficult task, he wrote his *Quatre Lettres à Malesherbes*, as a substitute for a full autobiography in case this should never be written.

Madame de Luxembourg, fearful lest her own interest in the work might lead to her being mixed up with the trouble, and therefore most anxious to get him out of the way, insisted upon his flight; he realised her position, and consented to go. The next day he escaped from Mont-Louis in a chaise provided by the Duke, leaving Thérèse behind him to look after his papers and settle his affairs.

CHAPTER V

Persecutions and Wanderings—Last Years and Death (1762–1778)

On leaving Montmorency, Rousseau's first impulse was to make directly for his native town, but he soon realised the unwisdom of taking this course until he had learned more than he knew at the moment of the general feelings of the Genevese towards him. He therefore decided that his immediate destination should be Yverdun, in the Canton of Berne, where he had an old friend, M. Roguin, who had often proffered him hospitality.

Turning his back upon Paris, he did his best to banish all recollection of his enemies and their machinations; nor, he declares, would he have given a second thought to what had occurred, but for the need of taking constant precaution for his safety on the way. The journey was tedious, but he beguiled the time by composing, in the style of the *Idylls* of Gessner, which he greatly admired, a prose poem on the subject of the Levite of Ephraim, whose story in the Book of Judges he had been reading that very night when the news of his danger was brought. At length, the boundaries of Berne were reached; and then, with a characteristic outburst of feeling, he

descended from his chaise, knelt down and kissed the ground, and exclaimed in his transport — "Heaven, Thou protector of virtue! I praise Thee! I touch a land of liberty!" No wonder that his postillion thought him mad. Poor Rousseau! Once more he dreamed of peace and quietude, and once more he was to be grievously disillusioned.

At Yverdun his mind was soon set at rest concerning any project he might still have cherished of pushing on to Geneva; for he now learned that, instigated by the French ministry, and before a single copy of the book had reached the town, the Council had ordered *Émile* to be burned, and himself to be arrested and imprisoned should he set foot within the Republic. This decree, following in nine days upon that promulgated by the Parliament of Paris, was, he says, "the signal for an outcry of malediction against me all over Europe — an outcry of unparalleled fury. Gazettes, journals, pamphlets, all sounded the most terrible tocsin. The French particularly . . . distinguished themselves by the number and violence of their attacks upon me—I was a blasphemer, an atheist, a madman, a lunatic, a wild beast, a wolf."[1] Still he could have settled contentedly at Yverdun, heedless of the tempest which raged without, had he been permitted to do so. But even under M. Roguin's friendly roof he was allowed no rest. The authorities at Berne followed the example set by the Council at Geneva, and he was ordered to leave a country the very soil of which he had kissed, believing it to be sanctified by the spirit of freedom.

Hopeless of securing a resting-place where he had

[1] *Confessions*, livre xii.

felt the most certain of finding one—in republican Switzerland—the unhappy fugitive now turned in his despair to the Principality of Neufchâtel, then under the dominion of Frederick the Great. He had, indeed, never concealed his contempt for a man who "thought like a philosopher, but acted like a king," and he was well aware that, on his part, the Prussian autocrat returned his aversion with interest. But he had faith in Frederick's tolerance and magnanimity, and without hesitation threw himself upon his protection. "Sire," he wrote to him, "I have spoken much evil of you, and perhaps I shall yet speak more. None the less, driven from France, from Geneva, from the Canton of Berne, I come to seek an asylum in your states. My mistake perhaps has been that I did not do this at first. Of this eulogy you are worthy. Sire, I have deserved no favour from you, and I ask for none. But I have thought it my duty to inform your majesty that I am in your power, and because I wish to be. Your Majesty may dispose of me as you think fit." Considering all the circumstances, it was certainly the height of folly for Rousseau to approach the King in such a spirit of reckless braggadoccio; but Carlyle is doubtless right in suggesting that Frederick was astute enough to accept the letter as a piece of pungent flattery thinly disguised as a snarl. At any rate, he not only extended his grace to the "unlucky cynic," but even made him offers of practical assistance—offers which Rousseau indeed promptly declined, but which none the less greatly softened his feelings towards him. No intimate intercourse resulted between protector and *protégé*. But in Marshal Keith, the Governor of Neufchâtel—an exiled Scottish Jacobite of many

eccentricities, but of simple manners and a warm heart—the recluse found a firm and generous friend, whose unfailing kindness was a great consolation to him at the time, and lingered in his memory like a last ray of sunshine amid the deeper shadows which presently closed about his path.

It was in July 1762 that Rousseau took up his abode at Môtiers, at the foot of Mont Jura, in the Val-de-Travers, and there he remained till September 1765—a period of three years and two months.[1] A niece of M. Roguin rented him a comfortably furnished house. Thérèse joined him; and for a time all went well. He has himself told us of the life he led in his new home—of how he climbed mountains and wandered in forests in quest of herbs and flowers; chatted pleasantly with the simple country-folk, whose songs he learned to sing; went on with the compilation of his *Dictionnaire de Musique*, begun ten years before; and amused his leisure with making laces, which he gave to the peasant-girls on their marriage, on condition that they should nurse their own children. He was overwhelmed with letters full of threats, or expostulations, or questions—often foolish enough—on education and religion; and sometimes his old alarms were renewed by the intrusion of strangers whom he took for spies. But on the whole he felt secure from his enemies in the territory of an enlightened monarch; peace again entered his turbulent heart; and he was happy—though not so happy but that real ailments and hypochondriacal fancies did not from time to time disturb his spirit, even suggesting momentary thoughts of suicide.

[1] His residence at Môtiers has been made the subject of special study by Fritz Berthoud, in his *Rousseau au Val-de-Travers*.

Rousseau added little to the bulk of his literary work during this period, and if we except the *Projet de Constitution pour les Corses*, which he drew up at the request of Buttafuoco and Paoli,[1] what little he did produce was of a polemical character. His first performance is worthy of special note. In August 1762, Christophe de Beaumont, Archbishop of Paris, denounced *Émile* in a pastoral which he ordered to be read in all the churches of his diocese. This document —which wounded Rousseau the more deeply because of the respect in which he had hitherto held its author— was something more than an official mandate; it was an elaborate argument against the principles and teachings of the work condemned; and for this reason, and because the archbishop's position gave great weight to his utterances, Rousseau singled it out from among the numerous attacks which had been made upon his book, for special reply. His *Lettre à l'Archevêque de Paris* may well startle by its outspoken self-laudation —"Did there exist in Europe," he declares, "a single government with views really useful and sane, it would have rendered public honours to the author of *Émile*, and erected statues to him." But though marred by the strain of egoism, it is a vigorous and effective piece of writing, rising in places to an eloquence which even to-day carries the reader completely away. By virtue of its force of reasoning and its sustained brilliancy of style, it easily takes rank as the masterpiece among his controversial works.

[1] It will be remembered that Boswell, having obtained a letter of introduction from Keith, visited Rousseau at Môtiers, and that it was on his recommendation that he made his famous tour in Corsica, which so turned his head that he appeared at the Stratford Jubilee with a placard round his hat, bearing the inscription of "Corsica Boswell."

In this letter Rousseau gave a general answer to his French adversaries. He had hardly got it off his hands before he found himself involved in hostility nearer home. In his reply to Beaumont he had taken occasion to proclaim his adherence to the Protestant faith of his fathers, hoping thereby to move the Genevans to withdraw their decree against him. So far from being conciliated, however, the Council ordered the seizure of all copies of the letter printed in Geneva. At this Rousseau lost patience, and addressed an epistle to the Council, solemnly renouncing his citizenship. This action threw Geneva into a tumult; three times his partisans (and there were not a few of these) demanded justice for him from the Council; three times the Council reiterated its decision; two parties were formed in the city; and, as it was generally realised that the dispute was really one of principle—of civil liberty against despotism, and of popular rights against the Council—feeling rose to fever heat. Rousseau himself undertook the task of pacification, but without avail. Presently a clever pamphlet by the *procureur-général*, Tronchin (brother of the physician), and entitled *Lettres écrites de la Campagne*, appeared, setting forth the case for the Council. Yielding to the representations of friends, Rousseau replied to this with *Lettres écrites de la Montaigne*, in which he handles, without gloves, the question of miracles, denies the right of the State to punish him for his opinions, accuses the Council of despotism, and exhorts the citizens of Geneva to "rise against an insolent and tyrannous aristocracy." This *brochure* only stirred his opponents to fiercer hatred, and was condemned at Geneva, and burned at the Hague and Paris—suffering

at the last-named place, by a strange irony of fate, along with the *Dictionnaire Philosophique* of Voltaire (April 1765). The battle raged furiously for a time, but of all the pamphlets which appeared in quick succession on one and the other side, one only, entitled *Sentiments des Citoyens*, now calls for remark. This was a venomous attack upon Rousseau, atrocious even for an age given to rank abuse in controversy, in which, under pretence of defending religion against a blasphemer, the anonymous author indulged in the coarsest personalities. Rousseau attributed this epistle to Jacob Vernes, a Genevese pastor and former friend. He was wrong. It was, in fact, the work of Voltaire, who, meanly allowing an innocent man to suffer the opprobrium of the production, found infinite pleasure in standing aside and watching the course of the quarrel he had caused between a deist and a believer. Yet Voltaire, not long before this, had offered Rousseau the shelter of his own home!

By this time Rousseau had, of course, the whole Protestant party against him, for the *Lettres écrites de la Montaigne* had openly flouted Calvinism and its exponents. In these circumstances, matters were only made worse by the fact that their author still persisted in attending the services of the Reformed Church, and, till prohibited from doing so by his pastor, in taking part in the communion. The antagonism of the orthodox Genevese now spread to the Val-de-Travers; Rousseau was denounced from the pulpit; his heterodoxy and his domestic life were alike held up for reproach. The ignorant peasantry of the neighbourhood were already prejudiced against him by the odd Armenian costume which he had adopted from hygienic

considerations, by his solitary life, and his eccentric habits; and in an atmosphere rendered miasmic by theological hatred, all sorts of terrible legends about him sprang into existence — he was a professional poisoner; he was Antichrist; he had taught that women have no souls. The ferment increased daily; he was hooted at in the streets; his house was attacked by night; according to his own statement, he went in constant danger of his life. Keith had by this time left Neufchâtel, and from the local authorities he could look for but little protection. At length he was seized with the madness of alarm; he believed that a diabolical plot was being arranged to assassinate him; and in September 1765 he secured his safety by flight.[1]

Again uncertain as to his movements — urged by friends in Paris to seek refuge in England, invited by Frederick to Berlin, half-minded himself to go to Corsica—Rousseau decided to retire to the little island of Saint Pierre, in Lake Bienne, which he had already visited in his botanical rambles, and with the gentle beauty of which he had been enchanted. One difficulty stood in the way—the island was within the jurisdic-

[1] Rousseau's extremely dramatic account of the circumstances leading up to and attending his departure from Môtiers, must be discounted in many particulars. Undoubtedly he was annoyed and insulted; but the mischievous children of the village seem to have been the worst offenders in this respect. There is no ground for believing that there was ever any thought of murdering him, as he imagined. On the other hand, the behaviour of his neighbours may well have made life intolerable, for in his morbid state of mind he seized upon and magnified every hostile word and gesture. We can hardly accept the explanation that the whole night attack of the 6th and 7th September, in which the affair culminated, was a mere ruse of Thérèse, who was tired of Môtiers, and wanted to frighten Rousseau away. The investigations of Berthoud to some extent support the general narrative of the *Confessions*.

tion of Berne. But, on application to the Bernese Senate, he was encouraged to believe that he would not be disturbed, and a few days found him, with Thérèse, comfortably domiciled with the receiver of the island. Once more his temperament came to his relief, and his curious power of living wholly for the moment reasserted itself. He found the island a veritable paradise for a man of his "peaceful tastes, and solitary, idle humour"; he enjoyed a full sense of freedom and personal security; and so long as he could botanise alone among the woods, and drift about the lake dreaming the hours away in lazy reverie, he troubled himself but little about either past or future. Those days at Saint Pierre he afterwards reckoned among the very happiest of his existence.[1] But he had hardly settled down to a full realisation of his isolation and tranquillity, when he was again rudely awakened by a thunderbolt from the world outside. Only a few weeks had elapsed before, for reasons unknown, the Government of Berne suddenly ordered him to leave the territory within three days. He knew from the start that it would be useless to resist, but to gain time—for he had absolutely no plans—he wrote asking for a suspension of the decree till his arrangements could be made, following this request up with a pitiful petition to be allowed, at his own expense, to live as a prisoner in one of the State castles, without pen or paper, but with a few books to read, and the privilege of walking sometimes in the garden.[2] The only answer of the Bernese Senate was a repetition of

[1] He has left us a glowing account of his life on the island, in his *Rêveries: Promenade*, v.

[2] Letters to Groffenried, bailiff of Nidau, 17th and 20th Oct. 1765.

its order in even more stringent form; and at the end of October, ill, wretched, and weary of wandering, Rousseau again found himself without home or country. "Mais où aller?"—that was once more the question. Winter was approaching; misfortunes following upon misfortunes began at last to break his spirit; more than ever he felt the need of rest for body and soul.

Leaving Thérèse at Saint Pierre, Rousseau went straight to Bienne, then a free town, at the express invitation of one of the inhabitants; and there he might have remained, but that his mind was tortured by fresh suspicions of threatened danger. He had now determined to place himself under Frederick's protection at Berlin, but, prostrated by fatigue and nervous excitement, he gave up the journey at Strasbourg, where he was received with enthusiasm, and where the *Devin du Village* was performed in his honour. At first he had some thought of remaining in Strasbourg for the winter. But the severe climate began to tell upon him, and, yielding at last to the pressure of friends, he accepted the invitation of David Hume, who was then in Paris, to accompany him to England; Hume generously (but most unwisely, as it turned out) himself undertaking the responsibility of his domestic arrangements.

He reached Paris, *en route* for London, on the 11th December, and was lodged by the Prince de Conti in the Hotel Saint Simon, which, being in the privileged enclosure of the Temple, gave him sanctuary against *lettres de cachet*. Great public excitement was caused by his arrival; from morning till night visitors of all ranks invaded his rooms, so that, as he complains, he had often to make his toilet in public; crowds followed him when he went to the *café*, or, arrayed in his

Armenian costume, walked in the Luxembourg Gardens. All this made it impossible for the authorities to wink at his presence in Paris in open defiance of the decree which was still in force against him, and he was himself most anxious to get away.[1] In company with Hume and a Genevese friend, M. de Luze, he left Paris on the 4th January 1766, and reached London on the 13th of that month. He has himself told us that, on landing in England, he was so completely overcome by the feeling that he had at length set foot upon the soil of freedom, that he threw himself upon Hume's neck and, without uttering a word, covered his face with tears and kisses[2]—a proceeding which may well have taken that rather placid philosopher not a little by surprise. Rousseau's writings were already well known in England; the newspapers were filled with personal gossip about him; distinguished people were eager to make his acquaintance; at the theatre, the king and queen were more interested in him than in Garrick himself.[3] Thus, greatly to the annoyance of Dr. Johnson, who, sitting in his seat of judgment at the *Mitre*, meanwhile condemned him as a "rascal who ought to be hunted out of society," he found himself the object of as much popular curiosity and enthusiasm in London as he had been in Paris.

Poor Hume soon discovered that, in charging himself with the business of getting Rousseau settled, he had undertaken a difficult and delicate task. For two months, he says, he employed himself and his friends

[1] Letter to De Luze, 26th December 1765.

[2] Letter to Hume, 10th July 1766.

[3] Letters of Hume to his brother (2nd February 1766) and to Blair (11th February), in Burton's *Hume*, ii. 309, 310.

"in looking out for some agreeable situation for him"; giving way to his caprices, indulging his humours, and sparing neither time nor trouble "to procure him what he desired."[1] Negotiations were first opened with a market gardener at Fulham, whose accommodation Rousseau rejected with disgust; after which, he was established for a short time at a farmhouse in Chiswick. Here he was joined by Thérèse, who was escorted from France—to quote Hume—"by a friend of mine, a young gentleman very good-humoured, very agreeable, and very mad"—to wit, the egregious Boswell. But Chiswick did not long satisfy the restless and captious wanderer—it was too near London, and people went thither to stare at him. Then there was some talk, which came to nothing, of Wales, of the Isle of Wight, of Surrey. Finally, he accepted from a Mr. Davenport, a gentleman of wealth and culture, the offer of his house at Wootton, Staffordshire; Mr. Davenport—out of consideration for his irritable sense of independence—agreeing to accept £30 a year for board for Thérèse and himself. "Desperately resolved to rush into this solitude,"[2] Rousseau reached Wootton about the middle of March, and soon afterwards wrote to his "cher patron"—as he now called Hume—that the place was in every respect delightful. Hume, however, had his misgivings. He foresaw that "without occupation, without company, and almost without amusement of any kind," the exile would be unhappy in that situation, "as he has indeed been always in all situations."[3]

[1] *Concise and Genuine Account of the Dispute between Hume and Rousseau* (1766), p. 12.

[2] Hume to Blair, 25th March 1766, in Burton's *Hume*, ii. 313.

[3] *Ibid.*

Rousseau's first letter to Hume from Wootton was of the most affectionate and grateful character; "if I live in this agreeable refuge as happily as I hope," he wrote, "one of the pleasures of my life will be to think that I owe it to you. . . . May you find in yourself the reward of all that you have done for me!" Little, therefore, could one have foretold the explosion which was close at hand. The Paris philosophers had warned Hume that he would never get Rousseau as far as Calais without quarrelling with him, and the outburst, though somewhat behind the time predicted, presently came.

Hume's misgivings proved to be well founded. Though the country about Wootton was as wild and picturesque, and the solitude as unbroken, as even he could desire, and though the villagers, taking him for some strange king in exile, left him unmolested, Rousseau was not as happy as he had anticipated. He suffered much from the bleak winds, frost and snow of a backward and inclement spring; Thérèse, after her habit, fell out with Mr. Davenport's housekeeper, and made herself generally disagreeable; the curse of Babel rendered it impossible for him to hold communication with his neighbours, and he was thus cut off altogether from human intercourse, which, considering the circumstances, even he might have found cheering. For years past, the black spirit of moroseness and morbid distrust had been growing upon him; he was already in a state of nervous excitability bordering upon actual mania; and the utter loneliness of his situation now helped to bring about a complete mental collapse. As, shut in upon himself, he brooded, day after day and night after night, over his real and fancied wrongs, the delusion

that he was the victim of an immense and foul conspiracy took stronger and stronger hold upon his imagination. In this mood he was ready to see in even the most insignificant incident the strongest confirmation of his own fixed idea. Now it happened that on his arrival in England, he had learned from Hume that a silly but cruel jest at his expense, in the shape of an ironical letter purporting to emanate from Frederick of Prussia, had gone the round of the Paris *salons*. Even after this had found its way to London, he had for the moment paid but little attention to it, supposing it to be a fabrication of Voltaire or d'Alembert. He now learned that its author was Horace Walpole, who was, as he knew, a friend of Hume. Instantly he leapt to the conclusion that his "cher patron" was a monster of iniquity, who, as a secret agent of his enemies, had seduced him to England with intent to compass his downfall. From that time on, he saw the hand of Hume in all the libellous attacks which were made upon him; conceived himself as kept in durance at Wootton Hall; and fancied that he went in constant peril of being kidnapped. Some unfortunate misunderstandings which arose in connection with Hume's successful attempt to obtain for him a pension from the king, served to intensify his bitterness, which, ere many months had gone by, burst into wild expression in that "enormous letter," as Hume calls it, in which, count by count, he sums up his grievances against a man who, at no small inconvenience to himself, had done his best to serve him. Hume, of course, understood that this document was destined for publication; he was, moreover, aware that Rousseau was writing

his autobiography, and that the whole story of their relations would there be set forth from Rousseau's point of view. It would doubtless have been wiser and more dignified for him to hold his peace, but after all it was quite natural that he should determine to forestall his former friend's public accusations by a statement in his own defence. He therefore placed the documents in the case in the hands of d'Alembert and Suard, whose pamphlet,[1] issued in Paris in October, appeared shortly afterwards in an English translation, supervised by Hume himself. At the same time, lest the accuracy of his transcripts should be called in question, or imperfect or incorrect versions circulated, he took the precaution of lodging his papers with the Royal Society of Edinburgh — the British Museum having unaccountably declined their custody.

Rousseau offered no public reply to Hume's statement, but continued to make private representations to friends in England and on the Continent. Life had been going more pleasantly with him at Wootton, where his botanical expeditions and work on his *Confessions* kept him pretty steadily employed. But it was not long before he fabricated a fresh instrument of self-torture. Mr. Davenport was guilty, as he chose to fancy, of a certain lack of consideration in connection with a matter of the most trifling importance. This was enough to convince him that his kind and patient host had joined the general league against him; and in May 1767 he fled from Wootton, leaving behind him, in his hurry and excitement, all his money, papers, and effects. His condition was now

[1] *Exposé succinct de la contestation qui s'est élevée entre M. Hume et M. Rousseau.*

pitiful to the last degree. He had alienated some of his kindest friends; he had abused their hospitality; he had returned their benefits with churlish ingratitude; he saw imaginary foes everywhere; he exaggerated the malignity and the power of the men who were really hostile to him; his mind was filled with the blackest thoughts, his imagination haunted by fantastic fears; there was no one left to whom it seemed to him safe to turn. And meanwhile his only companion in misery was the coarse and stupid woman who had undoubtedly played upon his suspicions that she might thereby drive him from Wootton, where the monotonous routine of existence had become intolerable to her. There are many who refuse to admit that Rousseau was ever really insane; but surely insanity is written in every line of the letters which he addressed to Mr. Davenport, and in his frenzied appeals to the Lord Chancellor and General Conway for protection against his persecutors. Conceiving that there was a plot to detain him in England, he now knew only one desire—to make good his escape. After some days of feverish wandering, he reached Dover. There he found that adverse winds prevented his immediate embarkation. This he regarded as a sign that the elements had joined with men in the universal conspiracy against him; and in his agony he mounted a bank, and harangued an astonished crowd in French. On the night of the 20th May, he at length succeeded in getting to Calais. One of his first noteworthy acts on reaching France was to subscribe towards a statue which was then being projected to Voltaire.[1]

[1] This must be considered as a bit of characteristic theatrical display. He himself says that it was "less a gift than an act of vengeance"

Till 1770, Rousseau's changes of abode were even more frequent and more rapid than they had ever been before. He made a brief stay at Amiens, and another at Fleury-sur-Meudon, as guest of the tempestuous Marquis de Mirabeau, the "Friend of Men." Then he spent a year (June 1767—June 1768), under the pseudonym of "Renou," at Trye-Chateau, near Givors, a seat of the Prince de Conti, where he botanised, and continued work on his *Dictionnaire de Musique* and his *Confessions*. But quarrels with the servants, petty misunderstandings with all about him, the increasingly unsympathetic conduct of Thérèse, and his own phantom fears of enemies and persecutions, combined to keep him in a state of mental torment, and again he sought relief in flight. From Trye he went south, passing through Lyons, Grenoble, Chambéry, but always goaded on by the same spirit of restlessness and by the same vague alarms. In August 1768 he reached Bourgoin (Dauphiné), where (apparently in the hope of reviving the woman's waning affections) he went through what he regarded as a marriage ceremony of a peculiarly sacred character with Thérèse—that is, in the presence of two witnesses he solemnly declared her his wife; afterwards pronouncing an eloquent discourse on the duties of matrimony. The performance greatly pleased him; how little it meant to Thérèse we may infer from the fact that, scarcely a year later, we find him writing to her in most pathetic strains about her coldness and neglect. From Bourgoin he went on to Monquin, near by, where a lady had put a house at his disposal, and

(*Rousseau juge de Jean Jacques: Dialogue*, iii.). If his object was to irritate his famous enemy, he was successful; for Voltaire was with difficulty persuaded to allow his name to remain in the list.

where, with the conclusion of the second part, he finished all that was ever written of his *Confessions*. The *Dictionnaire de Musique* had already appeared. Here he remained eighteen months. While the warm bright weather lasted he enjoyed something of the peace and happiness he had known at Saint Pierre, but winter brought physical suffering and mental torments again. "What! always to find men false, wicked, malevolent! always masks, always traitors, never a single face of a man! Ah, this life is too unendurable!"[1]

At the end of June 1770 he was once more in Paris. The *arrêt* against him had not been withdrawn, but he was given to understand that he would not be interfered with so long as he did not render himself obnoxious; and that he might attract as little attention as possible, he now consented to lay aside his Armenian dress. His return to the capital was, Grimm writes, the subject of current talk for many days. He established himself in an *appartement* of two rooms on the fourth floor of a house in the Rue Platrière (rechristened by his name at the time of the Revolution),[2] and took up his old work of copying music at ten sous a page. Rising early, he gave his mornings to this labour; the rest of the day he devoted—according to inclination and the weather—to chess at a *café*, to the

[1] Letter to Saint Germain, 17th February 1770. This letter, like most of those dating from this period, has for motto the quatrain—

"Pauvres aveugles que nous sommes!
Ciel, démasque les imposteurs
Et force leurs barbares cœurs
A s'ouvrir aux regards des hommes!"

[2] This street runs from the Rue St. Honoré, near the Louvre, to the Rue Montmartre.

theatre, to long solitary rambles beyond the suburbs. He cared little to go into society, and sought no new acquaintances. But he was still an object of curiosity to men and women of the fashionable world, who, to his profound annoyance, continued to force themselves upon him, and whom, in his more morose moods, he sometimes treated in a manner which effectually discouraged their return.

In some well-known reminiscences of a constant visitor at that time, the afterwards famous Bernardin de Saint Pierre, we have a vivid picture of the Rousseau *ménage*. The master himself is shown us, in white cap and long blue coat, bending over his work, or turning to try over an air on the spinet at his side; the little room, though neat and clean, is very meagrely furnished, with two small beds, a washstand, a table, and a few chairs; a plan of Montmorency and a portrait of the King of England hang on the blue and white wall; Thérèse is busy with her sewing; a canary sings in its cage; pots of flowers adorn the open windows; on the sill outside sparrows chirrup as they pick up the crumbs spread there for their morning repast. Saint Pierre throws over the scene something of the idyllic charm of which Rousseau himself had taught him the secret; but it is to be feared that, if we make the necessary allowance for sentiment and youthful hero-worship, we shall find that the reality was an establishment of a very commonplace *bourgeois* type.

Rousseau's main object in returning to Paris seems to have been that of confounding his enemies and rehabilitating his own character in the eyes of the world. To accomplish this end, he began by giving

readings from his *Confessions* to select gatherings in private houses. These singular performances (one of which is said to have lasted seventeen hours) enjoyed a certain *succès de scandale*, till Madame d'Épinay, naturally dreading public revelations concerning herself, contrived to have them stopped by the police. Then, in pursuance of his plan of self-defence, he wrote his *Rousseau juge de Jean Jacques*—three terribly long discursive dialogues, which are full of wild charges against imaginary foes, but in reading which we must at the same time be struck by the wonderful acuteness of self-analysis, the strange logical consistency of monomania, and the power and magic of a style which won the praise even of Grimm.[1] When, after four years of labour, his manuscript was at length completed, he determined—as he was persuaded that his foes would try to destroy it, and as he knew no publisher whom he could trust—to commit his cause to Providence, by placing a copy of his work on the great altar of Notre-Dame: his hope being that the news of this exploit would prevent the suppression of the document, and that it might even perhaps bring it to the notice of the King. He therefore made the manuscript into a parcel, adding an appeal to "the

[1] In these dialogues the note of madness is again unmistakable. To analyse them here would be impossible. Some notion of their quality may be gathered from the fact that Rousseau sees in the honours done to him and the praise given to his works, signs of deep-laid sinister schemes; that he asserts that kings and priests, men and women, in England, France, Prussia, are banded together to ruin him; that he accuses his enemies of bribing the greengrocer to sell him better and cheaper vegetables, thereby to expose his own baseness and their generosity; and of tampering with his coffee-merchant, his hairdresser, his boot-black; and that he is convinced that a card-board figure, burned during the *mi-carême*, was dressed to resemble him.

Protector of the oppressed, the God of justice and truth," and, in the afternoon of the 24th February 1776, repaired to the church to carry out his design. To his astonishment and unspeakable horror, he found the gate between the nave and choir locked against him; and, seized with vertigo, he rushed from the building, crushed by the thought that Heaven was once more assisting "the iniquity of men."[1] Mad as this behaviour was, his next step was equally expressive of a thoroughly disordered mind. He drew up a circular letter addressed *À tout français aimant encore la justice et la vérité,* copies of which he tendered in the open street to unknown passers-by whose faces chanced to please him. But here he met with an unforeseen rebuff; for the people to whom the paper was presented, having read the superscription, declared, with a *naïveté* which amused him even in his anguish, that it was not meant for them![2] All this surely shows clearly enough that, for the time being at least, Rousseau was no longer sane. But the *Rêveries d'un Promeneur Solitaire,* which followed the *Dialogues,* reveal a much more placid mood; while the *Considérations sur le Gouvernement de Pologne,* which he wrote at the request of a Polish patriot, is evidence that, even during the period of his greatest mental stress, he could, on withdrawing from the contemplation of his own misfortunes, still command his thoughts and pen.

Rousseau remained in Paris, and in his *appartement* in the Rue Platrière, nearly eight years. But little by little the old nomadic humour got possession of

[1] *Histoire du précédent écrit,* appended to *Rousseau juge de Jean Jacques.*
[2] *Ibid.*

him again, and he began to crave change. Increasing infirmities presently compelled him to give up his music-copying; and, with his resources thus diminished, he found life in the capital much too expensive. Offers of homes in the country were made by various friends, for to the last there were those who gladly extended to him their sympathy and help. He accepted that of the Marquis de Girardin, and on the 20th May 1778 moved to a little rustic cottage on the splendid estate at Ermenonville, some ten miles from Paris. The property was famous for its wonderful gardens, to the enjoyment of which Rousseau abandoned himself with childish delight, content to have the opportunity of indulging in the one pursuit which still had interest for him—botany. Though the behaviour of Thérèse was a sad obstacle to his happiness,[1] there seemed every prospect that the change might restore his health and calm his mind. But the end, already predicted by violent attacks of vertigo and sickness, was now at hand. Voltaire died in Paris on the 30th May, struck down in the hour of his last and greatest triumph; and the event seems to have deeply affected his old enemy. "I feel," he is said to have remarked, "that my existence was bound up with his. He is dead, and I shall soon follow." He was seized

[1] Into the question of this woman's habitual drunkenness, and her alleged misconduct with a servant of M. Girardin (which is sometimes said to have hastened Rousseau's death), it would be scarcely worth while for us now to enter. It will suffice to say that, of those who from first-hand knowledge have left us details of Rousseau's later years, there is, with the exception of Saint Pierre, not one who does not represent her as coarse, unattractive, and evil. She died at Plessis (Oise) on the 17th July 1801; thus living through the Revolution, and surviving her husband by twenty-three years.

with sudden illness in the early morning of the 2nd July, and died a few hours later.[1]

He was buried at evening in a spot which he himself had indicated to M. de Girardin not long before, on an island covered with rich verdure and beautiful poplar trees, in the gardens of Ermenonville. The place was marked by a simple marble tomb, bearing the words — "Ici repose l'homme de nature et de vérité," with the addition of his own chosen motto— "Vitam impendere vero." In 1791 the Constituent Assembly ordered the removal of the remains to the Pantheon, in Paris, where they were laid beside those of Voltaire. Their after history and present resting-place are uncertain.

The story of Rousseau's life is not an agreeable one, and it leaves us with an impression very far from agreeable, of his character. He was, as is universally acknowledged, a man of genius and a very great writer; he was one of the most powerful moral forces of his century; his immense influence told in many ways for good. But recognition of these facts must not distort our view of the man himself. Apologists have done their utmost to smooth away his faults, minimise his shortcomings, and by the alchemy of rhetoric transmute his very vices into virtues. Their efforts ultimately involve the postulate that there is one measure of conduct for the man of genius and another for common mortals—an assumption against which from time to time it is necessary to protest. Great as

[1] Various contradictory accounts have come down to us of Rousseau's last hours, and a certain amount of mystery still hangs over his death. The theory that he committed suicide (either by shooting himself, or by poison), maintained by Corancez, Madame de Staël, Musset-Pathay, Dr. Dubois, and others, may certainly be set aside.

are the claims of Rousseau upon us as one of the world's historic figures, he is still as a man to be judged by the standards of ordinary humanity; and so judged, he is found wanting. Johnson called him a "rascal" and "a very bad man." It is fair to make more allowance than did the sturdy English moralist for temperament and circumstance. But, passing Rousseau's career under review, we must sorrowfully admit that Johnson was right.

Rousseau was essentially an egoist and a sentimentalist. A man of morbid and colossal self-consciousness, everlastingly preoccupied with his own emotions, arrogant in the proclamation of his virtues and shameless in the exposure of his vices, he furnished in his voluminous autobiographical writings a gigantic illustration of La Rochefoucauld's maxim that we prefer talking about our faults to not talking about ourselves at all; and both his misanthropy and the churlish ingratitude with which he repaid those who did the most for him, had their origin in this irritable and insatiable vanity. Wholly governed by impulse and intolerant of all restraint, he talked unceasingly of freedom; but freedom for him meant, not that true liberty which is to be achieved only through cheerful obedience to the eternal laws of life, but simply absence of obligation and responsibility. He had no will-power, and no moral fibre. Idle, shiftless, careless alike of his own future and of the claims of others, his one rule of conduct was to "follow his heart"—that is, to yield to the desire of the moment, and let to-morrow look after itself. "I had a thousand times rather do nothing than do anything against my will," he wrote to Malesherbes; and he acknowledges in his *Rêveries*, that when

his duty and his heart were at variance, the former seldom gained the day. "To act from duty in opposition to inclination, I found impossible." What a confession of absolute moral weakness! At the same time, like a true sentimentalist, he was an epicure in his emotions, cultivating sensation for its own sake, and keenly alive to the delicate luxury afforded by goodness as a feeling. Thus he loved virtue in the abstract, while he paid little heed to the commonplace concrete virtues, and enjoyed descanting upon truth and rectitude and purity, though he was at the very moment indulging in the basest misconduct. His great principle, already cited,—to avoid situations which put our duties in opposition to our interests,—gives us, in its skulking unmanliness, the very quintessence of sentimental ethics. Sensibility is thus the keyword of his nature; but it is sensibility in its lower rather than in its higher signification. When Rousseau perpetually talks about his "heart" as his one motive force and guide, he really means, as Caro says, his senses.[1] And here we touch the most unpleasant aspects of his character—aspects with which it is unfortunately impossible to deal fully. He lacked altogether what Dr. Maudsley calls "a good sound animality," and his wretched physique and constant ill-health had doubtless a great deal to do, not only with his hypochondriacal obsessions, but also with his perversions of feeling, and his depraved fancies. His mind was deeply tainted with lubricity; he suffered from violent attacks of sensuous passion; once at least he was the victim of erotomania. Beyond this we cannot here push the discussion; but we have said enough to indicate some

[1] *La fin du dix-huitième siècle.*

of the terrible results of the continuous smouldering of his emotional nature, and to suggest that constant irritability of the senses may be regarded as part-cause of his eternal restlessness, if not of his mental collapse.

Rousseau's redeeming traits are easily marked—the more so as, for the most part, they show up vividly against the background of his age and surroundings. His generation was callous and hard-hearted. He had profound sympathy with distress, and, though always poor himself, was ever ready to stretch out a helping hand to the needy. Though his contempt for money, social rank, appearances, had something of a theatrical character, the stand he took against the well-nigh universal worship of the mud-gods of civilisation entitles him to our respect. He had the courage of his convictions, and was ready to suffer for what he held to be the truth. In the midst of insincerity, cynicism, flippancy, he was frank of speech, and always in earnest; and, according to his lights, he proclaimed idealism and religion to a world steeped in materialism and unbelief.

In attempting to formulate judgment upon Rousseau, we have, of course, to remember that his case is made difficult by the fact that we do not quite know where to draw the line at which his moral responsibility may properly be held to have ended. The question of his mental condition in the later years of his life has been much debated, and diverse conclusions have been reached. It is evident that he was always of unstable intellect and dangerous tensity of feeling; that his imagination possessed overmastering power; and that his sensibility—which was so intense that Hume described him

as a man "stript not only of his clothes, but of his skin"[1] —continually increased with age. But while all this is generally admitted, there are many who deny that Rousseau's mental derangement ever went as far as what may justly be called insanity. To me the matter seems open to no doubt; I believe that for many years —perhaps from the time of his departure from the Hermitage—his mind was giving way, and that from his arrival in England to his death he was subject to violent attacks of madness,[2] with relatively lucid intervals between the seizures. His ceaseless restlessness—or mania of vagabondage, familiar to alienists —was one phase of his insanity; but in its most important development — as seems perfectly natural when we remember his all-absorbing egoism and the circumstances of his life—it took the form of the mania of persecution.[3]

It has been said, not once or twice, but many times,

[1] Letter to Blair, in Burton's *Hume*, ii. 314.

[2] For a discussion of Rousseau's mental condition, see Brunetière's essay in the *Revue des deux Mondes*, February 1900, and the works of Desruelles, Mercier, Bougeault, Mobius, and Chaletain.

[3] Though, in dealing with the mania of persecution, Dr. Maudsley does not refer to Rousseau, much of his analysis accurately describes his case. For instance: "One of the best examples of the growth of a mental deformity into madness is presented by the gradual development of a genuine mania of persecution out of an over-sensitive and suspicious habit of thought and feeling; especially where the native infirmity, nursed in solitude and fostered by self-conscious exercise, has not been ballasted with the sound practical feeling and intelligent sense of proportion which come of converse and co-operation with men in the active work of the world. . . . In the result, we have a person who, of good common sense and sound judgment generally, perhaps very shrewd and capable, yet imagines himself the subject of special observation, slander, annoyance, insult, persecution in all sorts of incredible and impossible ways" (*The Pathology of Mind*, pp. 298, 299. Compare *Le Délire des Persécutions*, by Dr. Legrand du Saulle).

by writers on Rousseau, that after making all allowance for his vanity, his moroseness, his misanthropy, his ingratitude towards friends, his sensuality, his atrocious conduct towards his children, there is still left much that we can both admire and love. I cannot place myself at the point of view of such writers. To me, Rousseau, as a man, is a degenerate, who does not even possess the personal fascination which sometimes goes along with degeneracy. Yet the more carefully we study his life and character, the more reason shall we see to temper justice with mercy. Condemn him we must; but our condemnation may rightly be joined with pity.

PART II.—WORK AND INFLUENCE

CHAPTER VI

Rousseau's Attack upon Art and Science

Though he did not begin his career as an author till well on in life, and always had great difficulty with the work of composition, and though he possessed but little versatility of interest or power, Rousseau's writings are considerable in bulk and various in character. They comprise three comedies—*Narcisse, Les Prisonniers de Guerre,* and *L'Engagement Téméraire;* the fragment of a tragedy in prose—*Lucrèce;* several operas and musical interludes—*Le Devin du Village, Les Muses Galantes, La Découverte du Nouveau Monde, Pygmalion,* and the unfinished *Iphis;* a tale—*La Reine fantasque;* a prose poem—*Le Lévite d'Ephraïm;* a fair amount of occasional verse; some translations; a number of works on botany and music; and various miscellaneous treatises on diverse subjects; besides the few really important volumes with which his name and fame are now almost entirely associated. But it is with these few volumes only that we are here particularly concerned. They contained his special con-

tributions to the life and thought of his century; by them he made his wide appeal to the hearts and consciences of men; through them he exerted his profound influence both upon his contemporaries and upon the generation which followed his own, and whose business it became to translate revolutionary ideas from philosophical speculations into practical facts. Whatever interest his other productions may perchance possess for readers here and there, they must, therefore, for the present be disregarded. Our immediate aim is to appreciate Rousseau as a vital force in history; and we shall endeavour to accomplish this (so far as it may be done in the space now at our disposal) by, first, analysing the works which contain his distinctive teachings, and then indicating in a very broad and general way the effect of these teachings in the various activities of intellectual and social life.

In the Prize Essay of 1749, which formed so brilliant an opening to his literary career, Rousseau took up an extreme position as censor of modern civilisation. The Academy of Dijon had, it will be remembered, raised the general question of the moral influence of the sciences and the arts, and the amazing public success of his own work was undoubtedly due more to the daring character of its thesis than to anything specially noteworthy in the author's method and style. As a matter of fact, as we shall presently see, he considerably modified in later writings the violent statements with which he here caught the popular ear. For the moment, however, carried away by his own excitement, and ignoring altogether the complex relationships of the point at issue, he hesitated at

no extravagance which could be forced into support of the proposition he had set himself to maintain—that civilisation is a monstrous mistake, and that the arts and sciences are potent agents in social corruption.

Amid much that is merely incidental and discursive, it is sometimes difficult to indicate the real line of Rousseau's reasoning; but we may epitomise his main contentions in a page or two, without leaving anything of importance out of the account. Life, he insists, would be easy and simple if our outward shows were a true index of the heart—if decency really meant virtue, if our maxims actually served us as rules of conduct, if genuine philosophy were always associated with professed philosophers. But virtue rarely goes in grand attire. Riches may proclaim a man's opulence, and elegance may testify to his taste; but it is beneath the garb of a rustic labourer rather than the finery of a courtier that we must look alike for bodily vigour and for purity of heart. "Before art had fashioned our manners and taught our passions to speak a borrowed language, our morals were rude, but natural, and differences of behaviour revealed at once differences of character. Human nature was not at bottom better, but men enjoyed safety because they were able to understand one another thoroughly; and this advantage preserved them from many vices." To-day, convention has taken the place of natural impulse, and the result is an artificial exterior uniformity fraught with serious dangers. No sincere friendships based on real esteem and confidence are any longer possible; suspicion, fear, hatred, treachery, uncharity, are everywhere concealed under the boasted polish and urbanity

of our time. How shall we account for such depravity? The answer is simple. Our minds are corrupted in proportion as our arts and sciences progress towards perfection. "The misfortunes caused by our vain curiosity are as old as the world"; virtue flies before science and art as surely as the tides follow the moon. The evidence is furnished by history—Egypt, Greece, Rome, tell the same story of tragic downfall brought about by the same causes. On the other hand, look at the few peoples here and there who, resisting the contagion of useless knowledge, have by their virtues conserved their happiness, and have thus made themselves examples for other nations—the early Persians, the Scythians, the primitive Germans, above all the Spartans, who, while their Athenian rivals yielded to art and tyranny, drove from their walls arts and artists, sciences and *savans*. "Luxury, social dissolution, slavery, have been at all times the punishment of our proud efforts to escape from the happy ignorance in which Eternal wisdom placed us. The thick veil with which it has covered all its operations should suffice to warn us that we were not destined for useless investigations." Nature intended to save us from knowledge as a mother snatches a dangerous weapon from the hand of her child, and all the secrets which she hides from our ken are so many ills against which she would fain guard us. The essential evil of the sciences and the arts may be seen in their origin—astronomy was born of superstition; eloquence of ambition, flattery, hatred, and lying; geometry of avarice; physics of idle curiosity; ethics, even, of pride;—one and all, they owe their existence to our vices. And the taint of their origin clings about

them still, for of what use are they to us save to minister to the very evils out of which they sprang? Bred in idleness, they encourage idleness, and so unfit men for citizenship; the luxury to which they lead is fatal to morals; their adherents sneer at purity and religion, and do their best to destroy everything which has been held sacred among men. How beautiful was the simplicity of ancient times, when men lived together in innocence and virtue, in piety and peace! But now the old heroic qualities of hardihood and courage have disappeared, and education has become an elaborate system for teaching children everything except their duties. Hence the false standards of judgment now universal—we no longer ask concerning a man, if he is honest, but if he is clever; of a book, not if it is useful, but if it is well written. This suggests an attack upon printing, which Rousseau unsparingly condemns, because it has been the means of preserving the speculations and discussions of the philosophers—a "terrible art," therefore, the "frightful disorders" caused by which he regards as only prophetic of worse to come. In sum, the sciences and the arts which men so loudly glorify, have added nothing to our real happiness, while they have injured our morals and ruined our taste. Here and there may be found men like Cicero and Bacon, who were at once great thinkers and useful citizens. Rousseau therefore allows that certain rare geniuses may rightly and profitably devote themselves to study, raising thereby a monument to the honour of our human powers. But such are and must always remain exceptional cases. For the masses of men the interests and ambitions of learning and culture are wholly mischievous. For them, virtue is

the one science worthy of attention. Let them rest contented with that.

As may be gathered from the foregoing outline, Rousseau's famous first discourse is little more than a rambling rhetorical diatribe, containing much vigorous writing, and some perverted history, but nothing that can fairly be called solid argument. But the many attacks which were made upon it compelled its author, in self-defence, to find foundations for his statements and adduce reasons for his conclusions. In his various replies to his critics (in which it is to be noted that he adopts a distinctly more moderate tone), we have, therefore, a better opportunity than is presented in the original essay itself, of seizing the few great principles which at that time constituted the backbone of his thought. It will suffice for present purposes if we glance at his epistle to King Stanislas and the preface to his opera *Narcisse*.

In his rejoinder to the Polish monarch, Rousseau acknowledges that science is very good in itself. "The author of all things is the source of truth; to know all is one of His attributes; to acquire knowledge is, as it were, to participate in the Supreme Intelligence." This is finely said, and the concession might seem to cut to the very root of his former contention. But he goes on to argue that human intelligence is too limited for the right cultivation of science, and men's passions lead inevitably to its abuse. Hence the evil it has done. What science should theoretically accomplish, and what it has actually accomplished, are unfortunately two very different things. The study of the universe ought to lift the mind of man towards the Creator; in fact it only feeds his vanity. Philosophers almost invariably become impious. Learned Greece

was overrun with atheists; but no barbarian ever doubted the existence of God. Is it urged that the curiosity which goads us on to learn is a natural impulse? Then, Rousseau retorts, inconsistently enough, it must be restrained, like other natural impulses. In the conduct of life we need, not books or scholarship, but the inner guide which is in every heart. The Founder of Christianity entrusted His message to the charge, not of philosophers, but of unlettered artisans. The decadence of Christianity began when the Church had recourse to eloquence and erudition. "To-day, the sciences and the arts flourish among us; but is this of any advantage to religion? We are all learned men—and we have all ceased to be Christians." At the same time, when we talk of ignorance as better than learning, we must distinguish between the brutal ignorance which arises from an evil heart and a false intelligence, and the reasonable ignorance which results from the establishment of a proper check upon our curiosity. The former extends to the duties of humanity; it therefore multiplies vices, degrades the soul, makes men like beasts. The latter is fed by a keen love of virtue; it is synonymous with indifference to all things which are unworthy of attention because they do not contribute to well-being; it therefore generates contentment and peace. As to the practical bearings of his opinions, Rousseau has not a great deal to say, and in what he does say, he is extremely guarded. We must not hastily conclude from the principles advanced, that we ought at once to burn all our libraries, academies, and universities. By so doing, we should only plunge Europe into barbarism, and our morals would gain nothing in the

process. A people once corrupted never returns to virtue — not even if the sources of corruption are destroyed. To carry men back to the original state of innocence and virtue is everlastingly impossible. Their hearts once spoilt, must remain so. There is no remedy save in some vast revolution as much to be feared as the ills it might cure. We must therefore leave the sciences and the arts "to soften to some extent the ferocity of the people they have corrupted. . . . The enlightenment of the wicked is less to be feared than their stupid brutality, because it renders them at least cautious in regard to the ill they might inflict by the knowledge of that which they themselves might receive"—a conclusion which, even if we do not challenge it as it stands as unsound, must strike every reader as a singularly lame and ineffective conclusion to an argument which set out with such a mighty show of abstract principles.

Though the preface to *Narcisse* is largely the personal explanation of a man who could hardly escape the charge of inconsistency in writing operas while he abused all forms of art, it contains some passages which supplement the reasoning of the reply to Stanislas. The arts and the sciences, Rousseau now admits, are not the sole causes of the corruption of modern Europe. Many other influences have played a part, among them those exerted by the crusades, the discovery of the Indies, the spread of commerce, and the development of navigation. Still the harm done by the agencies now under consideration has been immense. A taste for letters always means the beginning of corruption among a people; for the source of such taste must be either idleness, or an ambition for personal distinction.

In a well-regulated state, every citizen would have duties enough to fill up the whole of his time, and the spirit of equality would prevent any one from being preferred to his fellows on the score of greater learning or ability. In a completely satisfactory social condition, therefore, neither of the motive forces behind the cultivation of literature would have any chance to work. Moreover, letters, philosophy, the arts, enfeeble body and soul. Sedentary habits render men physically weak; and without bodily vigour you cannot look for mental health. Meditation interferes with action; the pursuit of philosophy spoils a man for family life and citizenship, and so relaxes the social ties. Finally, Rousseau reverts to his contention that, though the sciences and arts have been so mischievous to society, they still have a place to fill in our present civilisation. A man who has ruined his constitution by taking medicine, may be bound to continue taking medicine to avert more serious consequences. So the same agencies which have brought about social corruption may now be necessary to prevent that corruption from going further. Hence the arts and the sciences, having begotten the vices, may become the instruments of their restraint.[1] By covering them with a sort of coating, they hinder their poison from spreading abroad; and though they destroy virtue, they leave the semblance thereof, which is always a beautiful thing. For the dread of being wicked, they substitute that of being ridiculous; and thus they replace virtue by social convention. Now,

[1] This seems to have been regarded by Rousseau as a very telling argument. He repeats it, in effect, in a letter to Voltaire of 10th September 1755.

in the original discourse, Rousseau had taken the ground that the change from natural conduct to convention was a most disastrous one. Here the argument seems to be, that when once natural rectitude is destroyed, it is better to have the support of convention than no support at all.

A more special treatment of this same theme of the corrupting influences of the arts, is to be found in the letter which Rousseau addressed to d'Alembert on the appearance of his article "Geneva" in the *Encyclopédie*.[1] Directly inspired by Voltaire, with an eye to the furtherance of his own personal plans, this article boldly advocated the establishment of a theatre in the austere little city which, since the days of the miracle plays, had given no countenance to dramatic art. The proposal filled Rousseau with alarm—he read in it the doom of the republican simplicity and manliness which had made Geneva what it was; and he hastened to expose the folly and the wickedness of the suggested innovation. His reply to d'Alembert is very long and very desultory; it deals with all sorts of matters—such as, for example, the amusements of Sparta, the social habits of Paris and Geneva, the relations of the sexes, and the contrast between antique and modern manners—which are connected only remotely, if at all, with the topic in hand; and on the whole it is an extremely tiresome and unconvincing piece of work. Yet some of the points made are well worthy of the attention of the student of Rousseau, who will soon discover here, even if he has not done so before, that our author's merciless digressions often contain his most characteristic and important utterances.

[1] See *ante*, p. 84.

Rousseau's starting-point is the uncompromising declaration that even if amusements are necessary, they should be permitted only when they *are* necessary, since every useless amusement must be accounted a positive evil "for a being whose life is so short, and whose time is so precious," as man's. Now the theatre is an amusement, and must be judged strictly as such; that is to say, it must be accepted or condemned not in the light of abstract considerations, but by an estimate of its actual effects upon society. About this matter, Rousseau holds, it is customary to talk a great deal of nonsense. The stage everywhere responds to public taste; it is the first condition of its success that it should do so. It has therefore no real power over the sentiments and morals of a people; all it does is to intensify national characteristics and give to existing inclinations a greater force. As for the Aristotelian doctrine that tragedy purges our passions through pity and fear, Rousseau retorts that, while it may purge the passions which we have not, it simply foments those which we have—a pretty sort of corrective, truly!

Advocates of the stage, however, make much of the alleged fact that its influence tends to render virtue amiable and vice odious. This, if really so, says Rousseau, can hardly be reckoned a miraculous achievement, since nature and reason have already done the same thing. But he emphatically denies the vaunted moral power of the drama. The feelings of pity and sympathy often aroused are transitory merely; they lead to no practical results; and to weep, however copiously, at fictitious sorrows is not a moral discipline, but only a sentimental luxury. Molière is rightly re-

garded as the prince of all comedy writers. Yet his plays constitute "a school of vices and bad morals, more dangerous even than those books themselves in which such things are avowedly taught." This is proved by a long examination of *Le Misanthrope.*

The disastrous results which the establishment of a theatre in Geneva would assuredly bring about directly and indirectly, are set forth in great detail. Rousseau shows, in particular, how the play-going habit would inevitably break up the simple and manly recreations of the Genevese, and destroy the antique austerity of manners which hitherto had given them strength and virile dignity. The model for the little republic should still be, not the great European capitals, with their luxury and dissipation, but ancient Sparta, the chosen home of plain manners and the city of free men. In such patriotic festivals as fed the martial spirit of the Lacedemonians, rather than in the effeminate shows of the theatre, Rousseau declares, his fellow-citizens might find fitting occupation for their leisure hours; and he gives a charming picture of such a popular fête, drawn from the recollections of his own childhood. The youth of Geneva may sometimes repine at being deprived of a form of entertainment so much in vogue elsewhere. Let them console themselves by remembering that solid happiness is better than the excitements of sensual indulgence, and that it is their high duty to transmit to their children the virtues, liberty, and peace which they have inherited from their fathers. Among the most important passages in this letter are those which reveal the writer's attitude towards women. Woman's sphere, he asserts, is the domestic circle; her duties are those of wife, mother, manager of the household; she should

have no interests beyond these. Hence, while he is hostile to the histrionic profession at large, his special condemnation is reserved for the female part of it. For a woman to show herself in public for the sake of money is nothing less than an outrage upon the modesty which should form the most beautiful ornament of her sex. Moreover, the worst feature of the modern drama is the large place which it gives to the "dangerous passion" of love. Now love is the kingdom of women, and they are its lawgivers; and an inevitable result of the everlasting preoccupation of the stage with this one subject is the extension of the power of women in society. Against the alarming prevalence of woman-worship, therefore, Rousseau enters a fervent protest. Man's natural duty, as he declares in the *Discours sur l'Inégalité,* is to command; woman's, to obey. The conventional pre-eminence of women, therefore, overturns the order of nature, and brings weakness, affectation, unreality, into both life and art.

In the attack upon the culture and activities of civilisation opened in the first discourse, and repeated in a different form in the *Lettre sur les Spectacles,* Rousseau, after his manner, indulged in a great deal of passionate declamation which it would be a mistake to treat too seriously. Always a vehement writer, he gave himself recklessly to the use of paradox and hyperbole, and here, as always, it is necessary, in reading him, to distinguish between his rhetorical extravagances and his real and fundamental thoughts. Though his reactionary utterances in the essays just considered, carried far enough, it is quite clear that he did not actually contemplate a general return to the quadruped

state and a diet of lettuce and water.[1] Yet the first discourse is, at bottom, if not a repudiation of civilisation at large, at least an unsparing indictment of the refinement and sophistication, the luxury and effeminacy, of his own age. Therein lies its true significance. And the logical basis of this indictment is to be found in the writer's central thought, that man was made by nature to be good and happy, and that everything added by society and civilisation tends only to his perversion and misery. The "secret opposition" which he says that he detected "between the constitution of man and our societies,"[2] appears as the underlying and vital principle of these minor productions, as it forms the corner-stone of his more important later work. Rousseau is never weary of contrasting the *real* man with the *fictitious* man—man in his original state with man as he has been made by society and culture,—the man of nature (*l'homme naturel*) with the man of man (*l'homme de l'homme*). This antithesis was by no means Rousseau's discovery; as we shall note in our next chapter, it had been employed by Hobbes and Locke in England; in France it had already appeared in the writings of Buffon and Delisle. But Rousseau caught it up, and by the use to which he put it, he made it entirely his own; and as his peculiar temperament and experiences led him into a fierce revolt against social life with its restraints and duties, the repudiation of such social life and the glorification of the life of nature, with its freedom and self-abandonment, became

[1] See Voltaire's brilliant letter of 30th August 1755, acknowledging receipt of the *Discours sur l'Inégalité*, and Palissot's comedy, *Les Philosophes*, iii. 9.

[2] *Rousseau juge de Jean Jacques: Dialogue*, ii.

the master-principle of all his thought and teaching. Everything is good as it comes from the hands of the Author of nature; but everything degenerates in the hands of man." This is the opening paragraph of *Émile;* and this, stated or implied, is the text of all his writings on politics, ethics, education, and religion.

It is impossible in dealing with Rousseau to separate the thinker from the man, for the latter constantly explains the former; and, as just above suggested, his reactionary theories may in part be traced back directly to his own character and circumstances. For what were the impulses which lay behind his brilliant and bitter attack upon the life and habits, the interests and diversions, of the witty, restless, fascinating, and corrupt society of the French capital? Unquestionably such impulses were in large measure of a purely personal nature. By birth a plebeian, and bred in the Puritan narrowness of his native Geneva, he was thrown while still a young man into the glittering world of Parisian high life, where he mingled with men and women of origin, education, and ideals widely different from his own. But while he lived *in* this world, he was never *of* this world. He had not the flexibility which has enabled many a *parvenu* to adapt himself to conditions altogether new to him; he had not the special kind of cleverness which would have won for him a recognised place at the fashionable dinner-tables and in the crowded *salons* of the time. Beside the polished men and the grand ladies with whom he associated in what seemed familiar intercourse, he felt himself awkward, clumsy, ill-at-ease. His conversation was not as theirs; his manners were not as theirs; he was *déclassé* in their midst, and he knew it. The effect of this know-

ledge upon such a temperament as his can be easily understood. Obscure, unhappy, ambitious, jealous, he was filled with bitterness against the very society which, in his humiliation, he affected to despise, and with a frantic desire to startle that society into attention and admiration. The inspiring thought of his first discourse thus appealed to him at once, because it gave him an opportunity for an indirect onslaught upon the *salons*, and because its striking audacity promised to achieve for him the distinction which he craved.

We know with what success his effort was crowned; but we must add that the excitement caused by his denunciation of so many of the very things of which modern civilisation was wont to boast, was not due alone to the sensational character of the attack. People are commonly amused by bold extravagances, and are ready to lend ear to any one who will give a fresh turn to old subjects, even though they may count his opinions as so much rubbish. In this way Rousseau might have been sure of his public. But this was not all. His more thoughtful readers, while refusing to accept his broad conclusions, must have recognised at once the element of wholesome truth bound up with them. If he was wrong in denouncing all art as a prime cause of social corruption, he was not wrong in insisting that a devotion to art for art's sake, without thought of life and morality, is at all times a certain sign of decadence; if he was unjustified in condemning culture, he was fully justified in proclaiming that all culture is valueless, which does not directly or indirectly feed the higher forces of human character. Beyond this, even Rousseau's paradoxes concerning natural innocence and the mythical first state of man,

appealed to many, and not without reason, in an age of widespread unreality and sophistication. To the gay circles of the great metropolis, where profligacy was often allied with intellectuality, where a love of arts and letters went frequently along with unspeakable depravity of morals, and where a fine external polish of manners and intercourse barely served to conceal a radical impurity of life, the words of Rousseau came as a trumpet-call to a simpler, saner, nobler, more natural ideal of existence. There were some at least among his readers who, while they knew nothing about the primitive peoples of whom he so confidently wrote, and cared nothing about the accuracy or inaccuracy of his historical data, did none the less under his influence come to realise, as they had not realised before, the evil condition of the society in which they lived, and the need of a change towards purer and better things.

CHAPTER VII

Political Writings

It was during his residence in Venice that Rousseau's attention was first seriously directed to the study of political philosophy. From that time on, the subject was constantly in his thoughts, and year after year he cherished the idea of dealing with it systematically and exhaustively. The design was never executed. But had the contemplated treatise been written, it could hardly have added appreciably to his influence as a moulding force in history. For by his *Discours sur l'Inégalité*, and still more by his *Contrat Social*, he left an impress wide and deep upon the thought and feeling, the theory and practice, of the revolutionary age.

The essay on inequality has much in common with that on the sciences and the arts, for its argument depends throughout upon the contrast between the "natural" state of men and their condition under civilisation. Its general proposition is that all men are equal in a state of nature, and that inequality is the result of institutions. Of course, we must recognise that certain kinds of disparity—as of health, age, bodily and mental powers, and so on—belong, whatever the circumstances, to the fundamental conditions

of life. But our present business is with those other differences among men which are artificially engendered, and rest wholly upon accepted conventions. What, then, would men have been, had they remained in their original state? and how came they to be as they now are? In answering these questions, Rousseau scorns to have recourse to books, which are full of lies, and goes straight to nature, where truth may always be found. That is, instead of tying himself down to history as written, he boldly fabricates history as he would wish it to be. Let us, he says, leave out all the facts, as having nothing to do with the matter before us. Such a heroic method, consistently pursued, would, it is evident, facilitate many discussions.

His point of departure is "the natural state of man." Since this perhaps never existed, and probably never will exist, it is doubtless difficult to describe it; but it is requisite to form a true conception of what it would have been, if we wish to judge intelligently of our present condition, for this can be tested only by reference to the abstract ideal of human life. Proceeding, therefore, to strip off all the "supernatural" endowments and "artificial" acquisitions of humanity, Rousseau finds that the "natural" man, though less strong than some animals, and less agile than others, was on the whole better constituted than any; that he slept beneath a tree, drank from the running brook, and kept himself healthy and robust by simple diet and constant exercise; that he lived in isolation, having no more need of his fellow than wolf has of wolf; that he had no knowledge of home, war, industry, commerce, relationships, or language; that he was governed by instinct; and that, having no sense of

duty, vice, or virtue, he was, in the present acceptation of the words, neither good nor bad. Love was with him merely a physical appetite, as yet untouched by moral feeling, which after all is only a factitious sentiment born of the usages of society. Yet along with the great principle of self-preservation, which largely regulated his life, another equally great and primitive principle exerted a constant influence over him — natural pity, or a feeling for others, which moderated the egoism of each individual, and thus made for the good of the race. Such being their condition, men were safeguarded against progress. If accidentally any one made a discovery, he could not perpetuate or transmit it; the art perished with its inventor; successive generations started from exactly the same point; centuries went by, and the rudeness of the first age continued; the species was already old, while man remained a child.

Rousseau does not undertake to analyse the forces by the co-operation of which man was carried from the state of nature to a state of civilisation. This question he properly regards as lying outside his immediate purpose. Accepting the fact of the change, be the causes what they might, he addresses himself to the task of showing how inequality arose with the very beginnings of the social system.

The root of all the evil is the idea of property. This had already been slowly taking shape before the dawn of civil society, for the invention of tools and the simpler arts of agriculture and the chase, the discovery of fire, and the formation of families, had familiarised men with the notion of personal possessions; while, as gregariousness advanced, the habit of accumulation

progressed with it. Thus the way was prepared for the great crime which marked the real opening of social history. "The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, undertook to say, 'This is mine,' and found people foolish enough to believe him, was the true founder of civil society.[1] What crimes, wars, murders, miseries, horrors, would he have spared to the human race, who, pulling up the stakes, or filling in the ditch, had cried aloud to his fellows, 'Beware of listening to this impostor. You are lost, if you forget that the fruits of the earth belong to all, the earth to none!'" But the individual with the required prescience and courage was not forthcoming; the usurpation passed unchallenged; division of land followed; then labour became necessary; and mining and agriculture brought slavery in their train. Thus inequality of condition arose, and from this sprung greed, avarice, ambition, oppression, rapine, and all the hideous disorders of our social state. Those who had possessed themselves of the land cleverly contrived to get the rest to accept the new conditions, by pointing to the state of general warfare in which they had all been living, and the need of doing something to establish security for all. Let us unite, they said, to guarantee the feeble from oppression, restrain the ambitious, and assure to each the ownership of that which belongs to him; and to accomplish this, let us institute rules to which all will be obliged to conform. "Such was or must have been the origin of society and laws, which gave fresh trammels to the weak, and fresh power to the rich, destroyed without recompense natural liberty, fixed for ever the law of property and

[1] This is imitated from Pascal, *Pensées*, 1ère partie, ix. 55.

inequality, made an inexorable right out of a clever usurpation, and for the profit of a few ambitious people subjected all the human race to labour, servitude, and misery."[1]

Rousseau marks out three stages in the progress of inequality among men—first, the establishment of law and the right of personal property; secondly, the institution of magistrature; and thirdly, the transformation of legitimate into arbitrary power. During the first stage, the difference of rich and poor was authorised; during the second, that of the strong and weak; during the third, that of master and slave. In conclusion, Rousseau insists that all inequality of convention is contrary to natural law whenever it does not correspond in the same proportion with physical inequality—"a distinction which sufficiently shows us what we ought to think of the kind of inequality which exists among all civilised peoples; since it is manifestly contrary to the law of nature, however one may define it, that a child should rule an old man, a fool lead a wise one, and a handful of people be gorged with superfluities while the famished multitude are in want of necessaries." As for our present political state, time has failed to remedy its ills. It is useless to mend and mend. The right method is to begin by sweeping away the old materials, as Lygurgus did at Sparta, and then to build altogether afresh.

Throughout this discourse, in which, as will be

[1] Elsewhere—as in his article on political economy in the *Encyclopédie*—Rousseau speaks of property as a sacred right, which he regards, sometimes as antecedent to the social contract, and sometimes as having been created by it.

noted, the revolutionary spirit finds in places the most emphatic expression, Rousseau's purpose is destructive. But mere destruction never satisfied him—his dominant aim was always positive and practical. The essay on inequality is not to be read by itself, but rather as an introduction to the work in which he attacked the political problem upon the constructive side — the *Contrat Social.* In passing to this from the discourses, we are conscious at once of a remarkable change in method and style. Hitherto he had been impassioned and rhetorical; now he seeks brevity and precision of statement: in the one case he had spoken as an orator haranguing a multitude, in the other he writes as a philosopher addressing philosophers. The result, from the ordinary reader's point of view, is hardly satisfactory, for in his desire to be concise and logical, Rousseau often becomes formal, dry, and, as Madame du Deffand complained, tiresome. Yet, while it lacked the elements of popular appeal which belonged to the early essays, the *Nouvelle Héloïse* and *Émile,* the *Contrat Social* was, like these, widely read, and read with intense excitement. Its daring principles, presented in plain language as incontrovertible truths, set men everywhere speculating on the meaning and justification of government in the abstract and of the *régime* under which they themselves lived. It mattered little that Rousseau's history was all wrong; that the bases of his argument were wholly metaphysical; that his inferences were often fantastic; that his method of starting from fictitious premisses and working his way to impracticable conclusions, was the very reverse of scientific. In an age in which the King of France could still sum up the whole theory of government

in the formula, *L'état, c'est moi*, the book came as a revelation—and a revelation the importance of which, in the light of after events, it would not be easy to exaggerate.

Rousseau opens his treatise with a fresh statement of the antithesis between the "natural" state of man and his social state. "Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains." Now, in what way is this change from "natural" freedom to political subordination to be justified? Might does not create Right, and the social state, therefore, cannot properly rest on force. If it did so, then, Rousseau asserts,—taking up the position already adopted by Diderot,[1]—the right to rule belongs only to those who are strong enough to exercise it, and successful resistance to authority is perfectly legitimate. Nor can it be derived from nature, since the social state is the negation of the natural state. As it depends neither on force nor on nature, it must therefore be based on convention. Thus we are led directly to the theory of the original social pact. At a given stage in their history, men came to realise that co-operation was necessary to welfare. Their problem, therefore, was to find a form of association in which the community would defend and protect the individual, while the individual himself, though uniting with all his fellows, would remain as free as he was before. This problem was solved by the social contract. Each individual gave up himself and all his rights to the community; but by thus giving himself to all, he really gave himself to none; and as there was no other member of the said community over whom he did not gain

[1] Article "Autorité" in the *Encyclopédie*.

the same rights as he yielded to him, each acquired a full equivalent for what he lost in the greater ability to preserve what he had. The essence of the contract, therefore, may be thus expressed: "Each of us puts his person and his entire power under the supreme control of the general will, and, in return, we all receive every member as an indivisible part of the whole." In this way is formed a Body Politic, with a common self (*moi*), composed by the union of all its individual members; and in order that the pact may not be a vain formula, it is understood that whoever refuses to obey the general will shall be constrained to do so by the whole body. And here Rousseau discards his earlier theories about the absolute superiority of the natural to the social state. The passage from the former to the latter, he now declares, has moralised and rationalised human life. By entering society, man lost some natural advantages, but the compensations are overwhelming. Though the social state has been turned to grievous abuses, it has transformed him from a stupid, ignorant animal into an intelligent being. While he had to sacrifice natural liberty, or the unlimited right to do what he likes, he has acquired civil liberty, property, and moral freedom. Thus the pact does not destroy natural equality, but rather counterchecks physical inequality by the equality created by convention and legal right. This principle is the true basis of the whole social system.

The sovereignty begotten by the social contract is thus synonymous with the general will; and in his second book Rousseau considers the extent, authority, rights, and duties of this ultimate power. Sovereignty, to begin with, is inalienable and indivisible—these are

the most important corollaries from the principles already established. It is also absolute, sacred, and inviolable. Yet, as it cannot overpass the limits of the original convention, every man can freely dispose of what is left to him of property and liberty by such convention. Laws are only the conditions of civil association; and "the people being subjected to the laws should be the authors of them." Yet Rousseau regards a legislator as necessary to frame a constitution and hand it over to the people—a man who, gifted with the genius of a Moses or a Lycurgus, shall adapt his laws to the needs and characters of those for whom they are designed. Liberty and equality should form the two chief objects of legislation. It is precisely because the force of circumstances is ever tending to destroy equality, that the force of legislation should be exerted to maintain it.

The question now arises, what is government? and this is dealt with in the third book. Contrary to common opinion, the government is not the sovereign; it is only a minister or officer of the sovereign—an intermediate body (which Rousseau calls prince or magistrate) charged with the execution of the laws, and constituting the required means of communication between sovereign and subjects. Hence the prince or magistrate exercises his powers merely as an agent of the sovereign; he cannot be independent of the people; nor are the relations subsisting between him and the people of the nature of a contract, but only of that of a commission from the people to its chief. The practical bearings of this doctrine do not need to be pointed out. Three kinds of government may be distinguished—the democratic, the aristocratic, and the monarchical. The

first is most suitable for small states; the second, for those of moderate size; the third, for large ones. Pure democracy, however, would be impossible, save in a nation of gods, and monarchy leads inevitably to serious abuses. Hence Rousseau's own preference is for aristocracy, or the government of the inexperienced many by the wise few. It must not be forgotten, however, that he is here considering, not the question of sovereignty (which, under any circumstances, is composed of the people as a whole), but simply the form of the agency to which the sovereign commits the administration of its affairs. But, as a matter of fact, all governments are more or less mixed, and their goodness is relative to conditions. Rousseau's test of excellence is the thoroughly deceptive one of numbers. "Other things equal, that government under which, without outside aid, naturalisation, or colonies, the citizens increase and multiply most, is the best."

In the relations of sovereign and government, tacit consent is assumed from silence; that is, while laws are essentially acts of the general will, the sovereign is held to confirm continually such laws as it does not abrogate. Rousseau's ideal is direct legislation by the whole people convened in solemn assembly.[1] Legislation by representation, which has come down to us

[1] His conception of popular assemblies is derived in the main from the Roman *comitia* and the little republics of Greece, and the practical exigencies of the proposed method lead him to desiderate a small state with a limited citizenship, like his own Geneva. If direct legislation by the people is impossible in the great states of modern Europe, that, he protests, is no argument against a man who contends for the limitation of the state as a condition of healthy political life. On the question of representation, see further, *Considérations sur le Gouvernement de Pologne*.

from the absurd and iniquitous régime of feudalism, is for him a contradiction of the first principle of the inalienability of the general will. But he admits the services of deputies of the people, provided always that their conclusions shall be carried to the sovereign by *referendum*. Government, therefore, is established by an act of the people, and even if the form chosen by them be monarchical or aristocratic, the depositories of executive power are not masters of the people, but officers only. The people make no permanent engagement with them; and can change the established form of government whenever in their wisdom they deem it incompatible with the general good. Even the social compact itself may, by agreement of all the citizens, be legitimately dissolved.

In his fourth book, Rousseau discusses various supplementary institutions of government in the light of Roman policy, for which he had an extravagant admiration, and of the supposed needs of his ideal state.[1] But by far the most interesting part of this closing division is that which deals with the relation of religion and the state. Here Rousseau distinguishes between the individual as individual, and the individual as member of the Body Politic. A man's personal belief is wholly his own concern, and with this the sovereign has no right to interfere. At the same time, no state ever existed without having religion

[1] It may also be noted that, regarding Sparta as a model in all things, he not only argued in favour of a censorship, but even spoke very gently of the institution of slavery in the little republic. Slavery is not legitimate, he says, yet Spartan liberty was perhaps maintained only by the help of slavery. "As for you, modern nations, you have no slaves, but you are slaves yourselves. You pay for their freedom with your own" (livre iii. chap. xv.).

as its basis. Hence the argument is that, apart altogether from any question of individual creed, there should be a purely civil profession of faith, the articles of which it is the duty of the sovereign power to determine in the interests of public utility, not indeed as dogmas of religion, but as "sentiments of sociability" —sentiments which lie at the root of effective union, since without them it is impossible to be a good citizen or a loyal subject. The state has, it is true, no power to compel any one to accept these articles; but, for the sake of its own welfare, it may banish as impious and unsocial any one who does not accept them; while, if any one, after publicly acknowledging them, conducts himself as an unbeliever, he should be put to death, for in lying before the laws, he has committed the greatest of crimes. The positive principles of civil religion should comprise belief in God, immortality, the happiness of the good, the punishment of the wicked, and the sanctity of the social contract and the laws. On the negative side, it should confine itself to the prohibition of all intolerance, as fatal to the social bond. "Whoever dares to say, Beyond this Church there is no salvation, ought to be driven from the state."

Thus in a single chapter Rousseau denounces intolerance and lays down conditions which would logically entail the banishment of all consistent Roman Catholics on the one hand, and of every one who does not accept Theism in some form, upon the other; at once asserts the right of the individual to his own faith, and makes the creed of Jean Jacques pre-requisite to citizenship! His proposed articles of belief, though he chooses to describe them as "sentiments of sociality," are in fact

religious dogmas of a very comprehensive character; and his scheme of a state religion, having these as its components,—even if it did not lead in practice to the almost inevitable conclusion that a government which had a right to force such tenets upon its subjects, would have an equal right, should it see fit, to impose others,—would, as it stands, have little margin for individual liberty of thought and expression. Rousseau's stated endeavour was to harmonise the freedom of the subject with the authority of the sovereign—to maintain the latter with the least possible curtailment of the former. But in this case, as elsewhere, the whole tendency of his doctrine was towards the tyranny of the mass over the unit.

The theory of a social compact, as constituting the basis of civil association and the justification of all government, was of course not original with Rousseau; on the contrary, it had long been a commonplace among political theorists when his treatise was written.[1] It had in particular been fully worked out by two English thinkers—Hobbes in his *Leviathan*, and Locke in his two *Treatises of Government;* and to both of these,

[1] For the early history of the theory, the part played by it in Greek speculation, its relation to the Stoic precept, "Live according to nature," and its influence upon the jurisconsults of Rome, see Maine's *Ancient Law*, chaps. iii. and iv. The appearance of the theory in modern European thought coincided with the decline of mediævalism, and its popularity was due to the fact that it offered a plausible explanation of the origin and meaning of civil society, in place of the theological one, with which men were no longer satisfied. The practical influence of the new thought in the seventeenth century is shown in an interesting way by the compact entered into by the Pilgrim Fathers on the *Mayflower*:—"We do solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God and of one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil Body Politic."

though to Locke more especially, he was under the greatest obligation.[1] But if Rousseau obtained his ideas at second hand only, he gave them, by his treatment, a life and power they had not before possessed. In the pages of his masters they had had little beyond a purely philosophical interest and meaning. In his own pages, they grew big with vast practical consequences. But for him the whole doctrine of the contract would have remained a landmark merely in the history of political speculation. It was he who carried it from the study into the street. It was he who gave it its "fatal authority"[2] over the minds and imaginations of men in the revolutionary age.

It is difficult for us to place ourselves at the point of view of those eighteenth-century readers to whom

[1] Hobbes described man as by nature selfish and unsocial, and his primitive state as "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." As a way of escape, a social state was established by "institution" or compact. Each individual ceded his natural rights, and received in return certain unequally distributed civil rights. In the hands of Hobbes, the contract theory made for absolutism; in those of Locke, it was turned to the support of constitutionalism. His first treatise was directed against the *Patriarcha* of Sir Robert Filmer (1680); the second furnished a constructive doctrine of government based on Hooker, in whose *Ecclesiastical Polity* the Social Pact makes its earliest distinct appearance. Together, the two essays constitute a philosophic defence of the revolution of 1688. Filmer had based the dogma of divine right on patriarchal authority. Locke having demolished this, and with it the claims of Jacobitism, proceeded to show that the institution of government rests upon assent. With Locke, then, the theory assumes great importance, as a counterblast to the dogmas of the patriarchal derivation of kingship and divine right, and as an attempted justification of government by reference to something besides force. In tracing the history of Rousseau's ideas, mention must also be made of Grotius, Puffendorff, Burlamaqui, and Morelly.

[2] Bluntschli's *Theory of the State* (English trans.), p. 294.

Rousseau's political writings came as the promise of a new order of things, and an indication of the way in which that new order was to be brought about. As we study them to-day, we are struck less by their freshness and power, than by the radical absurdity of their *a priori* method and their glaring historical errors. The evolution of society, as every one now understands, did not follow the course which he marks out with so much confidence; the sharp distinction drawn by him between the state of nature and the social state has no foundation in fact; the condition of the savage as described by him is totally unlike reality; the alleged compact is nothing but a myth or a metaphor.[1] Apart from these faults of interpretation, moreover, his doctrines upon their practical side are vitiated by his total want of appreciation of the actual development of social structures and the ever-increasing complexity of modern life, and by the fact that in his ideal small state—Sparta, early Rome, the Geneva of Calvin—he finds a model and standard for all countries and times. But while our greater historical knowledge and grasp render us painfully aware of these and similar shortcomings, there were few among Rousseau's contemporaries who were in anywise troubled by them. Thus they were left free to seize upon what for them were the really vital elements in his work—his denunciation of tyranny, property, and privilege, his protest against the unjust division of

[1] In his total disregard of facts and habit of spinning theories out of fancy and conjecture, Rousseau's method was the direct opposite of that pursued by "the father of modern historical research," Montesquieu, who indeed "supplied beforehand, if his countrymen would have appreciated it, an antidote to Rousseau's pictures" (Pollock's *History of the Science of Politics*, p. 81).

wealth and the exploitation of the many by the few, his assertion of liberty and the natural rights of man, his proclamation of popular sovereignty and of government by assent. In England, the doctrine of passive obedience had been rudely shaken by the events of 1688, and the dismissal of the Jacobite dynasty had exploded once for all the monstrous dogma of the divine right of kings. In France, the old conception of the sanctity of the existing order remained meanwhile in full possession of the field—as Bossuet had declared, monarchs were "sacred things," and even if they behaved as wolves it was the duty of Christian subjects to be "as sheep." Yet the thoughts of many were in an unsettled condition, and in that epoch of widespread intellectual and social unrest, Rousseau's eloquent enunciation of theories hitherto kept for the most part within the safe limits of philosophic discussion, was as fire to flax. A traveller who, at the beginning of the reign of Louis XVI., returned to France after some years of absence, was asked what change he noticed in the nation. "None," he replied, "except that what used to be talked about in the drawing-room is repeated in the streets."[1] And what was now repeated in the streets was mainly that which Rousseau had taught the large vaguely-discontented masses of men to think about and discuss. For them his teaching, however visionary it may seem to us, was pregnant with mighty and magnificent meanings; and thus "his dream became a deed that shook the world."

"That which distinguished the French Revolution from other political movements," as Mr. Lecky says,

[1] Taine, *Ancient Régime* (English trans.), p. 317.

"is that it was directed by men who had adopted certain speculative *a priori* conceptions of political right with the fanaticism and proselytising zeal of a religious belief," and he is guilty of no exaggeration when he adds that "the Bible of their creed was the *Contrat Social* of Rousseau."[1] The influence of a piece of literature upon the course of public affairs is, generally speaking, a matter for inference only; that of this "fundamental book" (as Lamartine called it) of the whole revolutionary period, may be distinctly and directly traced on almost every page of the history of the great upheaval. When Joseph Chénier said that the human race had lost its title-deeds, and that Rousseau had found them, he indicated something of the vital significance of the work for those who, first with sanguine enthusiasm, and later with ferocious determination, applied themselves to the gigantic task of reconstructing society. In their hands — in the hands of the men of the new generation throughout France—the *Contrat Social* was no merely theoretical inquiry into the abstract principles of government; it was a guide-book to action, a compendium of practical principles, as well. Rousseau, on the testimony of Mallet du Pan, "had a hundred times more readers among the middle and lower classes than Voltaire. He alone inoculated the French with the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people, and with its extremest consequences." It would be difficult, the same witness continues, to cite a single revolutionist of the days of '89, '90, and '91, who was not transported by his theories, and did not burn with ardour to realise them. And he adds that he himself, in 1788, had heard Marat

[1] *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, v. 345.

"read and comment on the *Social Contract* in the public streets, to the applause of an enthusiastic auditory."[1] A hundred details show that the little volume was eagerly read and discussed on every side;[2] and when the moment came for men to sweep away the traditions of the past, and to begin to build anew, it was still to that volume that they naturally turned for light and direction. The foundation principles of '89 were derived from its pages; the Jacobin programme was based on its teaching. Robespierre, like Marat, knew it from cover to cover, and his famous report of 1794, on the ideals which should govern the National Convention in the administration of the internal affairs of the republic, is simply Rousseau recast. The Jacobin attempt to establish a civil religion, the formulary of which should open with the declaration that "the French people recognises the Supreme Being and the immortality of the soul," is once more unadulterated Rousseau.

It must, of course, not be forgotten that though thus the great master of the revolutionists and the soul of their movement, with an influence so much the more powerful because, as Quinet well said, he bequeathed to them not only his ideas, but also his temperament, Rousseau did not himself preach revolution nor desire it. He was antagonistic to violence, and was keenly alive, as he told the Poles, to the need of care and caution in all matters of reform. It is certain that he would have recoiled with horror from the sanguinary brutalities of his fanatical followers; and, holding as he did that "the blood of a single man is more precious

[1] *Mercure Britannique*, tome ii. p. 362 *et seq.*
[2] Taine, *Ancient Régime*, p. 318.

than the liberty of the whole race," [1] he would have condemned as unsound, as well as inhuman, the entire policy of the Committee of Public Safety. Thus George Sand is in a sense perfectly right in protesting that the *Contrat Social* is no more to be saddled with the excesses of the Revolution than is the Gospel with the massacres of St. Bartholomew. Yet, as Mr. Lecky has said, "an author cannot choose what part of his teaching will take root in the minds of his readers"; and, while Rousseau's pages contained much that was diametrically opposed to the Revolution, and little that could logically be held to justify its violence,—while, therefore, we may not hold him morally responsible for the atrocities of the Reign of Terror,—his historic relation to even the extreme movements of the Revolution—another matter altogether from the question of moral responsibility—is not, on this account, to be overlooked or minimised.

In connection with Rousseau's remoter influence upon political thought and action, there is only one question to which we have here the space to refer. In the most famous and most important of all modern constitutional documents,—the Declaration of Independence,—we read that all men are born free and equal, that by their birth they are possessed of certain absolute inalienable rights, that the object of government is the maintenance of these rights, that the power of government inheres in the consent of the governed, and that the people may destroy or change the form of their government when it no longer fulfils its functions and achieves its end. Whether or not the framers of this proclamation owed anything directly to the teachings

[1] Letter to Madame ——, 27th September 1766.

of Rousseau, seems to be far from clear; that they did so, has been asserted and denied. But his indirect influence can hardly be doubted. The document is conceived wholly in his spirit, and in places his very accent is unmistakable.

CHAPTER VIII

"La Nouvelle Héloïse"

The full title of Rousseau's one novel—*Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse: Lettres de deux amans, habitans d'une petite ville au pied des Alpes*—was selected, he tells us, as expressly descriptive of theme and character, and in order that "any one opening the book would know what to expect." It is natural that it is by the sub-title that the work should now be most commonly known; for the basis of the romance is furnished by a variation upon the famous story of Abelard and his pupil. Though in the matter of prolixity Rousseau's production will easily bear comparison with its immediate English exemplar, *Clarissa Harlowe*, the essential elements of the plot, such as it is, may be briefly summarised.

Saint-Preux, the hero of the romance, is the tutor of Julie, the beautiful daughter of Baron d'Etange, and in their familiar daily intercourse a passionate love springs up between them. Unknown to the girl's parents, their relations become more and more intimate, until, on a certain evil day, carried away by a perfect hurricane of emotion, Julie, like Héloïse, yields to sudden impulse, and slips into that "abyss of ignominy" which opens so suddenly beneath the sinner's feet.[1] In

[1] Partie i. lettre 29.

tracing in detail the effect of this fatal weakness upon Julie herself, Rousseau gives us an admirable illustration of his psychology and method. At first she is overwhelmed with remorse and despair, and pours out page after page of bitter agony and self-condemnation. It is only as a calmer mood begins to prevail, that she is able to see the tragedy of her sin under its true light. Then she does not regret having given so much to love. Her sorrow is rather that love itself is now deprived of its greatest charm in losing that divine ardour which had at once animated and purified. "We have sought pleasure," she exclaims, in one of Rousseau's most memorable phrases, "and happiness has fled far from us."[1]

Though still ignorant of his daughter's dishonour, the Baron in course of time learns that the *mâitre d'études* aspires to her hand, and an explosion of anger over the young man's impertinence results. At this point a certain friend of Saint-Preux, an English nobleman, Milord Edouard Bomston by title and name, constitutes himself the lover's advocate. He has an interview with the Baron, to whom he discourses eloquently, and at considerable length, upon the natural equality of men, and the absurdity of conventional class distinctions. "The nobility of which people are so proud," he declares, "generally gives proof of little beyond the dishonesty and knavery of their ancestors. There are plenty of wicked people among the yeomanry, but you may always wager twenty to one that a *gentilhomme* is descended from a scoundrel. *Pardieu!* whatever you may think of me, I should be exceedingly sorry to have no other evidence of my

[1] Partie i. lettre 32.

merit than that of a man who died five hundred years ago." But these brave words, and the eulogy of Saint-Preux with which they are accompanied, are uttered in vain; nor does even Milord's magnanimous offer to endow the tutor with half of his own fortune suffice to break down the Baron's adamantine prejudices. He responds by simply forbidding Julie ever again to see her lover. Thus social convention intervenes to prevent the sanctification of love by an honourable, if tardy, marriage.

Torn by the conflicting forces of passion and filial duty, Julie herself now urges Saint-Preux to leave the neighbourhood. He obeys, though reluctantly; and his behaviour upon his departure (which is described in detail by the girl's cousin and confidante, Claire d'Orbe), exhibits an hysterical abandonment which, in more sentimental days, doubtless seemed impressive, but which we should condemn as altogether unmanly;[1] for the time has gone by when we could look with admiration or sympathy at the spectacle of a young man on his knees, kissing the steps of a staircase "a thousand times," and uttering "long groans." Separated in the flesh, the lovers now have recourse to their pens, and correspond with a regularity and an industry which would have done credit even to their Richardsonian prototypes. At first Saint-Preux's letters are full of pleadings and reproaches, but in time he becomes "more reasonable," ceases, to some extent, to fume and fret over his fate, and, at Julie's instigation, promises to seek a new career. This purpose takes him to Paris. Thence he writes of the world of fashion, into which he is soon introduced, and of the habits,

[1] Partie i. lettre 65.

amusements, and conversation of its inhabitants; while she responds with wonderful discretion, discussing the points raised by him, giving him reams of excellent advice, and encouraging him in particular to make the fullest use of his talents and opportunities. Saint-Preux's judgment upon the women of the metropolitan *grand monde* is very severe, and the fact that he afterwards gets into an entanglement with one of them, serves to give a sharper edge to his criticism.[1] Of this fault he makes frank confession to his mistress; whereupon Julie, who is nothing if not *sermonneuse*, and whose letters are models of erudition and prudence, reproves him for frequenting fashionable society at all, and urges him to pursue his moral studies, with greater profit as well as safety, among the *bourgeois*, and even the common people. There are questions enough to occupy his attention, she suggests,—as, for instance, why in a city so rich as Paris the lower classes should live in such misery, while extreme poverty is rare in Switzerland, where there are no millionaires? "It is in gilded apartments that a pupil catches the manners of the world, but the wise man learns its mysteries in the hut of the poor."[2]

After a time this correspondence is discovered by Julie's mother, and the real nature of the relations which have existed between the girl and her lover becomes known. The Baron is beside himself with rage; the mother, already hopelessly ill, receives a shock which hastens her end. Upon this, Julie, filled with remorse, demands from Saint-Preux the cancellation of their engagement, and receives from him the curt reply, "I render to Julie d'Etange the right to

[1] Partie ii. lettre 26. [2] Partie ii. lettre 27.

dispose of herself, and to give her hand without consulting her heart."[1] Shortly after this, however, she is stricken with smallpox. Saint-Preux hurries to the spot; insists upon seeing her; forces himself into her room; indulges in a paroxysm of weeping at her bedside; and by lavishing kisses upon her hand, deliberately contracts the disease in his turn.[2] At this point the novelist might have found a highly effective catastrophe for his story. But Saint-Preux and Julie both recover; and the latter ultimately yields to her father's importunities, and accepts a suitor she does not in the least care for—a certain M. de Wolmar, a Russian gentleman of wealth and position; well preserved at fifty; grave, and even austere in manner; always serious, calm, self-controlled; a thoroughly good man, but, alas! an atheist. Though she consents to this union, it is with the distinct intention of proving unfaithful to her marriage vows. But a nobler spirit takes possession of her at the altar, and she enters upon her new life with the determination to accept to the full the responsibilities and duties to which she now stands committed.[3]

Here, again, we reach a natural ending for the drama, and Rousseau would have been well advised had he dropped the curtain for good upon the marriage scene. His story would then have been one simply of sentiment and passion—of love turned to tragedy by the foolish conventions of the modern world, and of hearts made strong in affliction to meet the heaviest blows of fate; and though we should still have found the theme objectionable and the treatment character-

[1] Partie iii. lettre 11.
[2] Partie iii. lettre 14.
[3] Partie iii. lettre 18.

istically over-intense, there would have been comparatively little to offend us in the way of moral paradox and rhetorical extravagance. But Rousseau's larger ethical purpose led him to treat the marriage of Julie only as a fresh point of departure in his narrative. He had written in glorification of passion; he would write now of passion repressed and conquered by the higher law. What follows, then, is the ethical handling of the problem he has stated; but unfortunately, as we might have anticipated, it is marred by false taste, bizarre theories of conduct, and fantastic ideas about life.

Six uneventful years go by, and Julie finds peace and happiness in the quiet routine of household tasks, and in the education of her children. Meanwhile, Saint-Preux, having meditated suicide,[1] and been dissuaded therefrom by the long and elaborate reasoning of Bomston,[2] starts, at that friend's suggestion, with Anson on his historic voyage round the world.[3] Twice cast away on uninhabited islands (after the fashion set by Rousseau's favourite, Robinson Crusoe), he learns for himself the immense superiority of the life of "nature" over the life of civilisation; and brings back with him, as the principal result of his wanderings and observations, a deep admiration of the frugal simplicity, the innocence and the independence of the savage, and a corresponding horror of the greed and cruelty of those Europeans who, in their thirst for wealth and empire, have laid waste many a happy land, and reduced its inhabitants to slavery.[4] On his return, Wolmar, though fully cognisant of the past,

[1] Partie iii. lettre 21.
[2] Partie iii. lettre 22.
[3] Partie iii. lettres 23–25.
[4] Partie iv. lettre 3.

invites him to his home at Clarens, not as a visitor, but as a permanent member of his household.[1] "Though we do not yet know one another"—so runs the appeal of this excellent husband to the former lover of his wife—"I am commissioned to write to you. The wisest and most beloved of women has just opened her heart to her happy husband. He believes you worthy to have been loved by her, and he offers you his house. Innocence and grace reign here; here you will find friendship, hospitality, esteem, confidence. Consult your heart; and if there is nothing there which alarms you, come without fear." To this Julie herself adds a postscript—"Come, my friend, we await you with eagerness. You will not give me the pain of a refusal." This extraordinary proceeding on Wolmar's part represents for Rousseau the very height of wisdom, generosity, and courage. Of the generosity and courage nothing is to be said; but what of the wisdom? What, for that matter, of the taste and decency of the measure? However, Saint-Preux has no scruples; he accepts Wolmar's invitation; and though the meeting between himself and Julie, after so many years of separation, agitates him terribly, especially as Wolmar orders him to embrace his "sister and friend," he is resolved, come what may, to be worthy of the confidence which his host has reposed in him.[2] How great that confidence is, becomes clear when Wolmar presently still further exhibits his wisdom, generosity, and courage, by an even more heroic experiment. Having, or feigning to have, business on another estate, he absents himself from Clarens for a time, leaving Saint-Preux and

[1] Partie iv. lettre 4.

[2] Partie iv. lettre 6.

Julie alone together. The trial is a fierce one for them both; old memories arise with dangerous power; Saint-Preux is ready to succumb; but the stronger nature of Julie comes to their salvation.[1] Thus the crisis passes, and with Wolmar's return the placid life of the strangely composed household is renewed. If one is inclined to condemn this whole division of the story as at once ridiculous and offensive, we must remember that fine taste in such delicate matters was hardly to be expected in a man who had accepted the conditions of a *solitude à trois* at Les Charmettes; while it is precisely through this strained situation that the moralist presents one of his central lessons—the saving power of true religion in even the most perilous experiences of life. For "to sin and to repair sin by repentance," is, as Saint Marc Girardin put it, "the fundamental idea of Julie's history."

After this, the romantic interest of the narrative subsides, and we enter upon voluminous descriptions of the daily life of the Wolmar's establishment, with endless discussions of the administration of domestic affairs, the education of children, the management of servants, the distribution of charity, and many other similar topics, which occupy almost the whole of the fifth and sixth divisions of the work. These Rousseau himself considered "masterpieces of diction," but they are not therefore the less wearisome. Peaceful, and even happy, as Julie now is, one sorrow lies heavy upon her heart,—her husband, though the very embodiment of all the domestic and social virtues, is still an infidel.[2] She has, indeed, persuaded him to attend the public services of the church for the sake

[1] Partie iv. lettre 17.

[2] Partie v. lettre 5.

of the example which may thereby be given to his children and the peasantry. But while willing in this way to avoid scandal, and to "pay all the respect to the cult established by the laws, which the State may demand from a citizen,"[1] his opinions, as she knows, remain unchanged. But the revolution of thought which she had so long vainly hoped to witness, and for which she had earnestly prayed,[2] is at last to be effected by the tragedy with which the drama abruptly closes. During a trip to Chillon, one of her children falls into the water; she succeeds in saving him; but the shock and exposure are too much for her; an illness follows; and she dies. Wolmar is deeply moved by the event, and by the marvellous piety and resignation of his wife, whose last days are described with a fulness of detail hardly to be matched save in the parallel scene in *Clarissa Harlowe;* and though the conversion of the sceptic does not actually take place before the narrative ends, we are left with the feeling that the way is now prepared for it, and that it cannot be long postponed. As for Saint-Preux, his future is decided for him by Julie's dying petition, that he shall remain at Clarens to take charge of the education of her children. Let us hope, with one of Rousseau's French critics, that he will acquit himself better in this second tutorial task than he did in the first.[3]

Such, in outline, is the substance of Rousseau's famous romance, which set so many hearts beating wildly, and

[1] Cf. Rousseau's incidental discussion of the question of external conformity to a State religion in the *Contrat Social.*

[2] Partie v. lettre 5.

[3] P. Morillot, *Le Roman en France,* p. 301.

wrung tears from so many eyes, in the days when its pages were fresh, and its emotional outbursts seemed like a revelation of tragic passion to a society at once jaded and corrupt. In dealing with the work on the historic side, we will consider first, its place in the evolution of the novel, and then, the significance of its ethical basis and teachings.

If we kept our attention fixed only upon certain conspicuous characteristics of its form and style—its remorseless prolixity, its constant overflow of sentiment, its endless analysis of thought and feeling, its countless pages devoted to the casuistry of love—we might be tempted to classify the *Nouvelle Héloïse* as a direct offshoot from those seventeenth-century *romans à longue haleine*, by which the author's boyish imagination had been stimulated to precocious activity. But though, like Richardson's work, Rousseau's novel is linked at various points to the school of heroical romance, its true literary affiliations are to be sought elsewhere. Published at the opportune moment when the Anglomania which had long been growing in France had reached its height, and when at least a sympathetic reception was thus assured for it in advance, it had its immediate inspiration in that literature of middle-class feeling and morality through which the English democratic spirit was finding, decade by decade, an increasingly powerful expression. It is, in fact, a didactic *roman bourgeois* of the type which, in the hands of the fat and elderly little London printer, had initiated a revolution in literary taste over almost the whole of Europe.[1] Bourgeois himself by

[1] As our analysis of the story shows, the *Nouvelle Héloïse* divides itself naturally into two parts: the first, a romance of passion; the

birth, training, principles, and prejudices, obstinately tenacious of the traditions of his class, and undeviating in his hostility to the whole social world above his own, Rousseau had been drawn to such English books as he knew—to the *Spectator*, *Robinson Crusoe*, Richardson's novels, and the plays of Lillo[1]—by the middle-class attitude towards life, and the strong Puritan morality expressed in different ways in all of them; and wide as may seem to be the chasm separating the *Nouvelle Héloïse* from such works as these, its place is none the less close beside them, in virtue of its entire reaction against the aristocratic principle in fiction and the spirit of the *salons*, and of its eloquent declaration of the ethics and ideals of bourgeois life. Its immediate model was, beyond question, *Clarissa Harlowe*, which Rousseau in his *Lettre à d'Alembert*, pronounced the finest novel in the world, and of which, to the very end of his days, he never spoke "without enthusiasm."[2] Of

second, a sequel to this in the form of a highly moralised story of manners. The combination of these two elements is noteworthy; but it is the second part (in which, of course, Richardson's inspiration is most conspicuous) that gives the work historically its peculiar weight and interest. (See, however, what Hettner says about this in his *Literaturgeschichte des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts*, ii. 490–495.)

[1] In a footnote to the *Lettre à d'Alembert*, he picks out *The London Merchant* for special praise as an "admirable piece," the moral of which carries home more successfully than that of any French drama with which he was acquainted. The influence of this turgid and dismal play upon Diderot, and upon the Bourgeois Tragedy at large, forms a remarkable chapter in literary history.

[2] Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Fragmens sur Rousseau*. When Rousseau began to write *Julie*, the sensation caused by the then recent publication of *Clarissa Harlowe* was at its culmination. It should be added, however, that in after years Rousseau was not a little annoyed by the constant association of his own work with Richardson's, and by the already oft-repeated assertion (made, *e.g.*, by Fréron, in *L'Année*

course, one supremely important element in *Julie*—the element of "grande passion"—is altogether wanting in the work of the English master; and the total difference in atmosphere between the two may easily lead one to overlook points of fundamental similarity. Careful comparison none the less makes it pretty clear that Rousseau fashioned his romance quite closely upon Richardson's masterpiece. In the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, as in *Clarissa*, the central figure is a girl of rare intellectual and moral endowments, who is put under pressure by her father in his attempt (successful in the one case, unsuccessful in the other) to force her into marriage against her will. Julie is indeed, if not the sister, at any rate the first cousin, of Clarissa — a Clarissa with more passion and less insularity, but to the full the Englishwoman's equal in learning, sagacity, and priggishness; while Claire d'Orbe, the confidante of the one, like Miss Howe, the friend and adviser of the other, not only serves to carry on the machinery of the plot, but by her gaiety and cheery humour becomes a foil to the heroine's rather oppressive seriousness. Bomston, while in some respects reminiscent of the hero of Prévost's *Cleveland*,[1] may still be regarded as the analogue of Colonel Morden; but however this may be, he is particularly interesting as presenting, in his

littéraire, 1761, tome ii. pp. 306 *et seq.*), that he was indebted to *Clarissa* for plot and characters. As may readily be supposed, Richardson did not return Rousseau's admiration. He is said to have been "so much disgusted at some of the scenes and the whole tendency" of the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, "that he secretly criticised the work (as he read it) in marginal notes" (Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes*, iv. 598).

[1] Texte, *Rousseau and the Cosmopolitan Spirit in Literature* (English trans.), p. 109, *note*. Prévost's work, itself an illustration of the Anglomania prevalent in France at that time, Rousseau had read with intense interest.

gravity, stoical calmness, superficial chilliness of manner, and "extreme sensibility," Rousseau's ideal, formed before his bitter experiences north of the Channel had brought him disenchantment of English character and manners. Finally, we may perhaps suppose, though this is nothing beyond a supposition, that the infidelity of Wolmar was suggested by that of Lovelace. But while the two men have this trait in common, they are otherwise of diametrically opposed characters; since, while the one is a monster of iniquity, the other is a monster of virtue—"as irreproachable as he is uninteresting,"[1] which is certainly saying a good deal. Evidently the moral purpose which he had in view led Rousseau to give a fresh turn to this element of his story, for, according to his own statement, the atheism of Wolmar was designed as a lesson for the intolerant, as the piety of Julie was intended as a reproof to the philosophers.[2]

Thus inspired by the work of Richardson,—itself at the same time a fresh and original expression of the rising democratic spirit in literature, and in turn the direct progenitor of *Paul et Virginie* and *Werther*, of *Delphine*, *Corinne*, and *Atala*, in the age immediately following its own,—the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, considered simply as a novel, has no little historic significance. Properly to understand its place and meaning, however, we must compare it with the imaginative writings which held the attention of the cultivated reading world at the time it was produced,—with the work of

[1] Brandes, *Main Currents in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (English trans.), i. 17. It is frequently said, and probably with truth, that the Baron d'Holbach, author of the famous *Système de la Nature*, and many other works, was the artist's model for Wolmar.

[2] Letter to Vernes, 27th June 1761.

Marivaux, for example, of Duclos, of the younger Crébillon. Then, and only then, are we really in a position to appreciate Rousseau's attempt to bring the novel into harmony with the truth of nature; to change the centre of gravity of interest from external incident to the internal life; to substitute passion and inner conflict for the adventures and intrigues of ordinary romance; and, above all, to moralise fiction by infusing into it the high spirit of tragedy, and making it the vehicle of a serious philosophy of things.

It is with this last point that we are here chiefly concerned, since, whatever may be the historic importance of *Julie* as a piece of prose fiction, its main interest lies for us in its powerful and eloquent reiteration of some of the leading doctrines of Rousseau's gospel to his time.

Here, however, we must pause just to note the form of the work. Following Richardson, Rousseau adopted the epistolary method of conducting his story[1]—a method which may conceivably have all sorts of advantages in theory, but which the world has rightly come to regard as, in practice, synonymous with all that is dreary and unnatural; and the abuse to which this cumbrous machinery would inevitably lend itself in the hands of a man so much of a preacher and so little of a dramatist as Rousseau, may readily be conceived. As Madame du Deffand complained, all his characters have the author's own gift of "verbose eloquence"; and one and all, they repeatedly lose their identities to become the mouthpieces of Rousseau himself. Like Richardson's men and women, they have all a perfect

[1] For the way in which the first letters came to be written, see *ante*, pp. 73, 74.

mania for penmanship; time is nothing to any of them; they pour themselves out at merciless length about everything that happens; they perpetually argue, speculate, analyse, describe.[1] Now, all their everlasting digressions, controversies, homilies, are for modern readers tedious to the last degree. Yet it is precisely in these many pages of philosophical excursus, having nothing to do with plot or characters, that a large part of the interest for the book, for the student of Rousseau and his influence, will be found to lie. For it is here that the author reinforces and illustrates the moral principles which form the basis of the work as a whole.

The general conception or underlying ethical purpose of the *Nouvelle Héloïse* seems perfectly clear. It is, as has been said — the point has to be re-emphasised—a novel of bourgeois life. Though the heroine herself is nobly born, her lover is a mere tutor —a plebeian; and we can here detect at once the revolutionary spirit which dictated this indirect attack upon conventional notions of caste and marriage. As in the novels of Richardson, the long descriptions of pure and peaceful domestic existence are set over-against highly charged pictures of the *salons* of the fashionable world. Nor is the contrast presented a

[1] The absurdities of the epistolary method, as pursued by Richardson, have often been noted by the scoffer. One example will suffice. According to the computation of Sir Leslie Stephen, Harriet Byron, on one occasion, writes in three days enough to fill 144 octavo pages of print! Rousseau's personages are just as bad. I do not know that it has ever been pointed out that Richardson's enormous letters really take the place of the endless conversations and disquisitions in the old Anglo-French romances, to the broad outlines of which the author of *Clarissa* adhered more closely than is commonly supposed.

contrast merely between these two antagonistic ideals of life. It is a contrast also between the country and the city — between the quiet routine of things, the poverty and the virtue, in a little Alpine community, and the rush and tumult, the licentiousness and corruption, of metropolitan civilisation. Thus the principle at the heart of the romance is that which furnishes the characteristic keynote of the greater part of Rousseau's teaching.[1]

It is, indeed, by reference to the opposition thus emphatically postulated between "nature" and civilisation, that what would be more specifically called the moral of the *Nouvelle Héloïse* has to be interpreted. The book has been described as the glorification of passion, though to treat it simply as this is to disregard the significance of the entire second part, which, with its stress upon duty triumphant over passion, may fairly be said to contain a refutation of the doctrine implied in the first. But to take that doctrine only, what does Rousseau's glorification of passion really mean? On what basis does Saint-Preux rest his claim to Julie as a divine right, beside which social conventions and parental prejudices appear utterly empty and absurd? Again the magic word is "nature." The passion which Rousseau preaches is simply "nature" seeking free expression. The social conventions and parental prejudices by which "nature" is checked and thwarted are forces of that much-vaunted civilisation which has destroyed the primitive truth and purity of life.

[1] The general theme of *Julie* might almost be stated in the words which announce the text of *Le Paysan Perverti* (1775), by the notorious Restif de la Bretonne, often nicknamed "the Rousseau of the gutter": "O mes enfants! restons dans nos hameaux, et ne cherchous point à sortir de l'heureuse ignorance des plaisirs des grandes villes."

In the earlier books of the romance, the writer's general theme is developed mainly through the long and pungent letters sent to Julie from Paris, in which Saint-Preux ridicules the follies and denounces the vices of the brilliant capital. Almost every aspect of the gay and frivolous life of the metropolis comes in for scathing criticism. One malign and tyrannous power the young tutor, fresh from the open and unsophisticated relationships of the country, finds regulating everything—the power of convention. Convention is the god before whom men and women alike bow down, whose laws they obey, whose anger alone they fear. "Il faut faire comme les autres"—that is the first and last word of wisdom; "cela se fait," or "cela ne se fait pas"—that is the final criterion by which all actions are judged.[1] It is fixed by rule when a visit may and may not be paid; when one should go out, and when stay at home; with what degree of sorrow one must receive the intelligence of such or such a death; how long one must mourn in rural retirement; and on what particular day it is allowable to return and console one's self in town. Thus the whole of fashionable society does precisely the same things in the same circumstances, with the mechanical regularity of a regiment of soldiers or a lot of marionettes.[2] Under such conditions, how could frankness and sincerity be expected? As a matter of fact, the Parisian world knows nothing of frankness or sincerity. "It is the first evil of great cities, that men become in them other than what they really are, and that society gives them, so to speak, a different being from their own. This is especially true of Paris."[3] Men's common talk

[1] Partie ii. lettre 17. [2] *Ibid.* [3] Partie ii. lettre 21.

is no index to their characters; it is idle to seek for any kind of vital correspondence between their speech and their thoughts. Moreover, self-interest is their one motive-force—they are to be influenced only by an appeal to that.[1] And herein lies the secret of the harsh judgment which universally they pass upon one another. Instructed by their experience of the world, and above all by their own consciences, men and women at large take the course of thinking as badly about human nature as possible, and of always seeking for some hidden evil as the real cause of whatever appears to be good.[2]

It is natural that Saint-Preux should reserve his severest condemnation for Parisian women, about whom, as about the whole question of the relation of the sexes in fashionable society, he has not a single good word to say. Nothing about a Parisian woman, he insists, is really individual to herself—weight, size, bearing, figure, air, look, conversation, manners, are all matters of artifice and convention.[3] Everywhere one turns, one hears nothing but jargon, babble, *propos sans conséquence;* the man who is admired is not he who has performed good actions, but he who has said fine things; and for this condition of affairs the women are mainly responsible. One of the commonest subjects of conversation is what goes by the name of "sentiment"; by which is to be understood, not a healthy spontaneous emotion, bred of friendship or love,—that would be either ludicrous or tiresome,—but a vague and meaningless something wrapped up in high-sounding phrases and metaphysical subtleties,—a

[1] Partie ii. lettres 14, 16.
[2] Partie ii. lettre 17.
[3] Partie ii. lettre 21.

matter of *esprit* rather than of the heart.[1] Of love itself—love in the rich and sacred significance of the word—there is none; the love about which there is so much talk and so much discussion, is simply gallantry; and this gallantry Saint-Preux makes the object of vigorous and telling attack. What is the result? he asks. All natural feelings and ideas have been reversed. Adultery does not shock people here, he writes. Marriage in Paris is only an agreement between two people to occupy the same house and bear the same name. It does not entail reciprocal rights and duties.[2]

And here Rousseau repeats the protest, which we find him making elsewhere in his writings (particularly, it will be remembered, in his *Lettre à d'Alembert*), against the woman-worship established in modern societies, and once more sets forth the evil consequences which inevitably ensue when what he insists upon as the natural order of things is upset, and that sex is raised to pre-eminence whose proper place is one of subordination. "French gallantry has given universal power to women. . . . Everything depends upon them, and nothing is done save by them or for them. Olympus and Parnassus, glory and fortune, are equally under their laws. Books sell, authors are esteemed, only as it pleases women. They decide authoritatively concerning the highest matters of knowledge no less than the most agreeable. Poetry, literature, history, philosophy, even politics,—one can see from the style of all books that they are written to amuse women. . . . In affairs, they are in a fair way of obtaining what they demand, a natural ascendency over their hus-

[1] Partie ii. lettre 17. [2] Partie ii. lettre 21.

bands, not as husbands, but as men. For it is understood that a man must refuse nothing to a woman—even if she is his wife!"[1] This, for Rousseau, is a very serious state of affairs. It means the destruction of all virility, the reign of effeminacy, the sapping of the true foundations of life.

Another point of attack is furnished by the amusements of the Parisian world,—particularly the opera[2] and the drama,[3] which are condemned as frivolous and immoral. In what Saint-Preux says of the theatre, there is one criticism of special importance, in view both of the character of the *Nouvelle Héloïse* itself and of the general bourgeois movement in the literature of the times. Plays, the observer complains, are written and performed wholly for fashionable society, and are entirely aristocratic in their range and spirit. Writers of comedy would think themselves dishonoured if they were supposed to know what went on in the shop of a merchant or under an artisan's roof. They must deal with illustrious personages, and seek in the rank of their characters that elevation of style to which their own native genius would assuredly never raise them.

In contrast with these lively onslaughts upon the life and manners of a great city, in the earlier part of the work, we have in the second division minute descriptions of an ideal establishment in the country, its routine, methods, and organisation, together with much direct ethical teaching on many subjects which these matters serve to introduce. Every detail of the Wolmar *ménage* is discussed at immense length. As

[1] Partie ii. lettre 21.
[2] Partie ii. lettre 23.
[3] Partie ii. lettre 17.

we have already noted, there are regular essays on domestic economy,—the government of dependents, the proper use of money, the relief of beggars,[1] and the principles of education;[2] and through Julie, the perfect housewife and mother, we are taught the true place and functions of women in society. Saint-Preux dwells much on the quiet happiness of life at Clarens, and the undisturbed contentment of its inhabitants. Their fortune is small according to the standards of the world; but with all his experience of metropolitan wealth and splendour, he knows of no one more opulent than they. Everything is regulated by the strictest notions of frugality: the diet is plain; the household arrangements at large are almost primitive in their simplicity; embroidery is the chief pastime of the women of the family; the butcher is paid in cattle, the grocer in wheat. Wine, oil, and bread are all made at home.[3] Here, Rousseau declares, is the true ideal of existence, if a foolish and much-deluded world could only be brought to understand it. And in dealing with the peasantry of the neighbourhood, the preacher seizes the opportunity of proclaiming anew some of his most characteristic theories. Kind and generous to the poor about them, the Clarens household will do nothing for those who, through restlessness or ambition, desire to rise above their lot. "The natural condition of man is to cultivate the earth and live by its fruits. The peaceful inhabitant of the fields needs only to know his happiness in order to enjoy it. For all the true pleasures

[1] Partie iv. lettre 10.

[2] Partie v. lettre 3. This letter (or, more correctly, treatise) should be carefully read by all students of *Émile*.

[3] Partie iv. lettre 10.

of man are within his reach. . . . His state is the only necessary, as it is the most useful one. It is unfortunate when other classes tyrannise over him by their violence, or seduce him by the example of their vices. It is in his class that the true prosperity of a country consists. . . . When it is a question of estimating the public power, the *savant* (*bel esprit*) visits the palaces of the prince, posts, troops, arsenals, cities. The true statesman travels into the country, and finds his way into the cottages of the labourers." [1]

To follow Rousseau further through his incidental discussions of duelling, suicide, the fundamentals of religion, the relations of God and man, the origin of evil, the sanctions of conduct, the supremacy of conduct, and many of the practical problems of education and society, would demand more space than we could here afford; and we must thus content ourselves with the statement that on all such topics the *Nouvelle Héloïse* largely repeats the essential principles which we have dealt with in other divisions of our study of its author's philosophy of life. There is still one important subject, however, which the present work gives us an especially good opportunity for considering, and which, therefore, must not be passed over without remark — Rousseau's feeling for, and treatment of, nature.

In his explanatory title, it will be remembered, the writer had announced that his romance was composed of the letters of two lovers, "habitans," he adds, "d'une petite ville au pied des Alpes." Now, to any reader of that day, opening the book for the first time, such a minute specification of the principal scene of

[1] Partie v. lettre 2.

the action must have appeared unnecessary and unmeaning,—Paris or Switzerland would have been all one to him. But to us it is quite clear that Rousseau had ample reason for putting the words cited upon his title-page. In the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, as never before in the history of prose fiction, nature becomes a distinct and fundamental element of the human story. Woven into the drama of life and passion, of sin and moral victory, are magnificently wrought pictures from the country which Rousseau never ceased to love and yearn for—of the austere landscapes of Valais, and the fertile Pays Vaudois, of the lovely borders of Lake Geneva, of the scenes of ever-varied charm about Meillerie, Vévai, Clarens; and of the great Alps, stern, silent, majestic, dominating all. And these descriptions are not merely a background for the human action. They are associated with it, and an integral part of it. Rousseau, Sainte-Beuve said, invented the "sentiment de vert." He was certainly one of the very first, not in France alone, but in Europe, to discover the country, to feel its beauty, to penetrate its religious meaning, to proclaim to all whose lives were dungeoned in cities, and whose horizons were bounded by brick and mortar, the glory, the freshness, the anodyne sweetness, the uplifting power, of nature. What he accomplished in this way alone, it is difficult for us to-day quite to realise, for we have caught fire from the ardour of his disciples—Bernardin de Saint Pierre, Chateaubriand, George Sand; and have sat at the feet of Wordsworth, and Byron, and Shelley. But to the first readers of his romance, whose furthest flight of imagination beyond the streets and squares of the metropolis carried them only to Versailles, Rousseau's vivid and rapturous

pages literally opened up a hitherto undreamed-of world. It is no abuse of language to say that the *Nouvelle Héloïse* revealed a new emotion and started a new cult.

Nor must we overlook the significance of the fact that nature appeals to Rousseau almost as powerfully in her wilder and sterner aspects, as in her gentler moods and manifestations. He loves the quiet pastoral landscape, the softly flowing river, the clear blue sky, the morning song of birds; but his soul is none the less deeply moved by the stupendous grandeur of the mountains, the solitude of Alpine passes, the deafening crash of mighty torrents, the awe-inspiring spectacle of a world of ice and snow. In this modern feeling for the sublime in nature, in this modern love for nature far removed from human influences and associations, Rousseau stands alone among the French writers of the time. Gray had years before written privately with some delight of his journey to the Grande Chartreuse;[1] and, almost contemporaneously with the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, Macpherson's grandiose rhetoric had familiarised English readers with the "wild and romantic" landscape of the remote and solitary north.[2] But in France no sign of this new sentiment had hitherto appeared; while, even in England, mountain scenery was still very commonly regarded (as in the days of Defoe and Addison) as "barren and frightful"[3] rather than impressive and sublime. Thus, though Rousseau himself never ventured so far as his disciples in his

[1] See his letters of 1739.

[2] See Blair's *Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian*, 1763.

[3] The words are quoted from Defoe's description of Westmoreland, in his *Tour through Britain*. Addison's total lack of appreciation of the beauties of the Alps has often been referred to.

enthusiasm for nature in the savage state, his historic place as the first interpreter of the wonder and glory of the Alps is incontestable.

One of the most interesting illustrations of Rousseau's whole feeling for nature is to be found in what he says about nature under domestication. Here is the old antithesis, in another form, between what is "natural" and what is touched, manipulated, and spoilt by man. A thoroughly artificial age could tolerate nature only when "improved"—when all that is spontaneous was checked or destroyed, and everything ordered by line and rule. Hence the principles then popular in landscape gardening; against the trim parterres, the terraced walks, the neat hedgerows and clipped yew trees of which, as against all such stiff formality, Rousseau entered his indignant protest. Nor does he rest in protest alone. He teaches a practical lesson of the better way, by describing at length Madame de Wolmar's *Élysée*, or garden "in the English style."[1] This is in general appearance a simple orchard, carpeted with turf, adorned with thyme, roses, marjoram, and lilacs, and closed in by creepers and parasitic plants. The "fine perspectives," so commonly sought after, are here deliberately avoided, since "the taste for views and distances arises from the propensity which the majority

[1] Partie iv. lettre 11. It will be remembered that already in the early part of the eighteenth century, English landscape gardening had broken away from the conventional methods of the French and Dutch schools. (See, *e.g.*, Blomfield and Thomas, *The Formal Garden in England*, chaps. ii.–iv.) The English style was at bottom a return to a more natural ideal. Gray, eulogising the English for what they had accomplished in this direction, speaks of gardening as "the only taste we can call our own, the only proof we can give of original talent in matter [*sic*] of pleasure" (Letter to W. T. Howe, 14th September 1763).

of men have to find enjoyment only in places where they are not." Nothing is arranged or methodised; there are no straight lines or level walks; for symmetry is the enemy of nature. Not the slightest trace of culture is visible; in the rich growth of tree and shrub the hand of the gardener is never manifest. Such artifice as is employed, is employed simply to maintain the freshness, vigour, spontaneity of nature. The fault of most "men of taste" is that they want the art they use to be visible. True taste consists in having as little art as possible, and in having even that carefully concealed. How different, then, is Julie's arbour as laid out under Bomston's advice and guidance, from what it would have been had some wealthy man from Paris or London become owner of the estate! With all sorts of affectations in flowers—like the fashionable tulipomania, which Rousseau unsparingly ridicules—and all kinds of absurd ideas as to what would be fit and proper, he would have brought with him a highly paid architect, whose business it would be to spoil nature according to the most approved notions of art. With what disdain would this great authority have regarded such a simple and humble spot! What symmetry he would straightway have introduced into it! What an elaborate design he would have carried out! And the result? Well, the result of this, as of all such experiments, would be only to exhibit the false taste and the vanity of both proprietor and architect.[1]

[1] Texte points out that Julie's *Élysée* became so popular, that for a long time after the appearance of the *Nouvelle Héloïse* "there was not a good sentimental novel published which had not its grove, its avenue of trees, and its 'arbour'" (*op. cit.*, p. 108).

Though the *Nouvelle Héloïse* simply gives a fresh expression to Rousseau's oft-repeated ideas, and adds little or nothing of consequence to the essentials of his teaching, it none the less occupies a very important place in the body of his works. As a novel, it made a far wider appeal than any of his other writings, and carried his doctrines home to thousands who would have remained absolutely indifferent to formal statements and elaborate arguments. We have seen that the book aroused the wildest enthusiasm, that it was read with passionate interest by a society whose ideals it attacked without reserve or mercy, whose morals it denounced, whose pretensions it ridiculed. Thus it may be regarded as, among all Rousseau's productions, the one which had the largest, most immediate, and most vital influence upon the popular thought of the time. Readers of "sensibility"—that is, of that new mood of intense emotionalism which the romance itself did so much to generate—who wept over the woes of Julie, who followed with breathless sympathy the moving story of her love, her downfall, her struggles, her noble devotion, and her death, and for whom she became the typical woman of feeling, thus unconsciously grew to consider the work as an evangel, absorbed its author's most daring and reactionary doctrines, and had their tempers attuned to his.

CHAPTER IX

"Émile"

It is in keeping with the bizarre character of Rousseau's entire career, that a man who was to a large extent the victim of vicious early influences,[1] who had himself failed as a practical teacher, and who had sent his own illegitimate children to the Foundling Hospital because he did not wish to be encumbered with them, should have thrown himself with the utmost ardour into the work of educational reform. Yet his interest in the subject was deep and genuine. He believed that reform was urgently called for; he believed also that the gospel he set himself to preach with all the vigour and persuasive eloquence of which he was master, contained the true word of salvation. It must be remembered that he approached the whole question of education from the point of view of social theory, and that the

[1] It will be noted that, though much of his own experience in childhood and youth goes to the fashioning of *Émile*, a great deal in the book runs directly counter to that experience. Yet even here the personal element is strong, since the contradiction is only one among many illustrations to be found in his works of the everlasting conflict between the man's ideals and his actual life. As Compayré has admirably said: "What Rousseau would have wished to be and never was, that Émile will be, or at least Rousseau would desire him to be" (*Rousseau et l'Éducation de la Nature*, p. 22).

first principles of his social doctrine formed the corner-stone of his pedagogical teachings. He saw clearly that the methods of training children then in vogue were adapted to a type of society which he regarded as radically evil. The reconstruction of society would necessarily require men and women essentially different from those which such methods were capable of producing, and thus the reconstruction of the educational system itself became for him a matter of pressing need. *Émile,* which he himself justly held as one of his most important works, and which may indeed be considered his most substantial title to fame, is thus an integral part of his social philosophy, and a direct offshoot from it. Written without any regular preparation in his own life and experience, it is not an inductive study of childhood and its problems. Its central doctrines are deductions from the author's general conceptions of society, and rest ultimately upon them. The keynote of *Émile* is struck in the opening sentence, and that sentence only re-enunciates what we have seen to be the master-thought of his earlier writings: "Everything is good as it comes from the hands of the Author of nature; but everything degenerates in the hands of man."

Full of repetitions, digressions, and extraneous matter, and everywhere clogged with detail,—"a collection," as Rousseau himself describes it, "of reflections and observations, without order and almost without sequence,"—*Émile* is not a very easy book to read, and is an extremely difficult one to analyse. In the present attempt to epitomise its more important teachings, many matters of great pedagogical interest will have to be neglected. It must suffice for our purpose if we

can realise something of the general tendency of the work and of its historic place and meaning.

In structure, it is a treatise thrown roughly into the form of a story—that is, its educational philosophy is set forth, not in abstract statement, but through the narrative of a "case"—that of the child selected for experiment, Émile. Strictly speaking, Rousseau declares, the natural and only proper teachers for a child are its parents—in infancy the mother, and afterwards the father.[1] But if for any reason the father cannot or will not undertake the charge, then a tutor must be carefully chosen to fill his place. It is curious, if Émile's training is to be accepted as wholly "natural" and representative, that his should be one of the unusual and "unnatural" instances in which the parents fail to fulfil their proper functions. But so it is. Émile is an orphan, and Rousseau himself becomes his tutor. Certain things he requires us to assume to start with—the boy must, for example, be of sound health and constitution, and, that no financial restrictions may interfere with the experiment, he must belong to the wealthier classes. Again, we may object that these initial conditions render the case far from representative. But they are Rousseau's data, and we must accept them.

The work is composed of five books, the last of which deals with the education of women, while the other four are concerned with the four large periods into which Rousseau divides the development of the child under his charge from birth to full maturity. Book I. covers the period from infancy to the age of five; Book II. that from five to twelve; Book III. that

[1] Here follow the eloquent words on the sacred duties of paternity, already quoted.

from twelve to fifteen; and Book IV. that from fifteen to twenty or twenty-two. These divisions are supposed to answer to actual stages in growth, and mark very distinctly certain most important changes in educational method. Rousseau had seized the truth that education should be progressive; that a real system of training must adjust itself to the unfolding needs of mind and character; and that the common habit of treating the child from the first as if he were already, so to speak, an empty adult to be filled up with information, was a ludicrous and fatal mistake. But the divisions adopted by him are manifestly arbitrary and artificial; no such absolute breaks occur in natural growth; and the attempt which, as we shall see, he makes to separate the sensational from the intellectual, and this again from the moral, could, if successful, lead to nothing but the most disastrous results.

Émile, by the hypothesis, is to have everything in his favour, and therefore, since real men and women are not to be grown in cities, he is brought up in the country. During his first period, he does not come immediately under the charge of the tutor, who simply overlooks and directs the women who for the time being have the care of him. Though obviously the matter hardly concerns an orphan boy, Rousseau here makes his famous appeal to mothers to nurse their own children, instead of handing them over to hirelings, as was then the fashionable way; and—which is more to the point — his equally famous attack upon the swaddling-clothes in which babies were in those days so tightly bound up that they could hardly move hand or foot.[1] Much specific advice is given on questions of

[1] Richardson had already touched upon these matters in *Pamela*.

the nursery—baths, milk, the cutting of teeth, and the like. Already the dominant purpose is to make the child simple and rugged. Artificial toys are forbidden; fear is to be overcome by early familiarity with spiders, toads, masks, darkness, the noise of firearms. No effort is to be made to develop the child's vocabulary. "It is a great disadvantage for him to have more words than ideas, and to know how to say more things than he can think,"—a remark which may be applied with equal propriety to children of larger growth.

At five, Émile's education has progressed thus far—he can eat, walk, and talk. He now passes from the hands of the women into the care of the tutor, who henceforth is to be his one inseparable companion.

The second book deals with "the most critical period of human life"—the years between five and twelve. During this time, Rousseau's great contention is, education ought to be purely negative. The aim is "not at all to teach virtue or truth," but "to shield the heart from vice, and the mind from error." The common idea is that in these years the child should learn all sorts of things. This, Rousseau declares, is all wrong. To do nothing and allow nothing to be done, is the golden rule. Trust nature and let her have her way. "The most important, the most useful maxim of all education is, not to gain time, but to lose it." Therefore, encourage idleness. "Exercise the body, the organs, the senses and powers, but keep the soul lying fallow as long as you can." At twelve, the boy ought to be sound and robust — and unable to distinguish between his right hand and his left. Then—but not till then — may what is ordinarily called education begin.

Fantastic as all this seems, Rousseau's argument contains the important principle that the common habit of "forcing" the mind is absolutely evil, and that our effort should be to extend childhood as long as possible. Like Locke, Rousseau insisted upon a right then scarcely recognised—the right of childhood to exist for its own sake. "Nature desires that children should be children before they are men." All studies that transcend the child's real experience are premature. So much danger lurks in mere verbal knowledge, that Émile is to learn nothing by heart. So far from his being put to languages (which formed the very foundation of the traditional system), he will hardly, at twelve, know what a book is. Reading he will simply pick up of his own accord by being artfully encouraged by the sagacious and tireless tutor in the desire to read. He will be taught to draw—of course from the objects themselves—for the training of hand and eye; and to drawing, music may be added. But the main thing all this while is to keep him in free and constant intercourse with nature, and to see to it that his physical powers are exercised, that his senses are developed, that he gains daily in strength, vigour, hardihood, courage.

As to government, or moral control, that is to be left wholly to the discipline of natural cause and effect; or, even where the tutor is bound to intervene, the interference must still be made to seem a matter of necessary consequence. There is to be no use of either punishment or reward, as ordinarily understood. Here, as in sundry other places, we must reckon Rousseau among the forerunners of Herbert Spencer, whose cardinal principle of moral education is thus anticipated. Locke had said "we must reason with children."

Rousseau scouts the idea—we cannot expect and ought not to wish a child of ten to be a reasonable creature. Not by argument, but by being left in dependence upon the things which make up his environment, is the boy to be trained in right conduct. If he breaks the windows of his room, they are not to be mended. The wind should be allowed to blow in upon him, for it is better that he should catch cold than grow up a fool. If he breaks the windows again, he is to be placed in a room where there are no windows. Always he is to be made to experience the pain or discomfort naturally arising from his bad behaviour.

At twelve, Émile is presented as the embodiment of boyish health and spirits; and this, because he has lived the life, not of a precocious little man, but of a child. Were he to die then, says Rousseau, there would still be some consolation in knowing that he had at least enjoyed his childhood, missing nothing of what nature had intended that he should gain.

But it is now time for our young "roebuck" to begin to learn; and we enter upon the period between twelve and fifteen, which is to be devoted to intellectual education. One might object that, never having acquired the habit of steady thought and fixed attention, Émile is very poorly prepared for this brief but most important stage in his career. But Rousseau thinks otherwise, and proceeds to show us what marvellous results the boy, if properly managed, is capable of achieving in the short space of three years.

Even now he must not be forced to do anything against his will. It is indeed necessary that he should learn concentration, but the motive-force should always be curiosity, interest, pleasure, never constraint: about

as dangerous a doctrine as could well be imagined, unless young men are to go out into the world with the idea that all that is required of them is to do what they like. Human intelligence, Rousseau argues, is very limited; we cannot know everything; but fortunately there is a good deal that is not worth knowing. The spirit of his system, he insists, is not to teach a child many things, but to put him in the way and give him the power of learning important things for himself. It is therefore a question of choice among studies, and here we must be guided by the principle of utility, remembering always, however, that nothing can be useful, at any given time, which is not well within the range of the child's comprehension. Hence no account is taken of grammar or the ancient languages, while history is for the present proscribed, nominally because it is beyond Émile's grasp—which is surely absurd—but really, we may suspect, because history, by carrying the mind out into society, would tend to destroy the artificial isolation upon which so much is made to depend.[1] The greater part of the time is now to be spent on the physical sciences. Astronomy and geography, which head the list, are to be learned without maps or globes; chemistry, statics, hydrostatics, and similar subjects, through personal observation and experiment. The great principle is to have nothing to do with the ready-made science which one finds in books, and to guide the pupil for himself from fact to fact, from generalisation to generalisation, from law to law. In other words, we must substitute first-hand knowledge, which alone is real knowledge,

[1] In his *Considérations sur le Gouvernement de Pologne*, however, Rousseau gives a large place to history in the scholastic curriculum.

for second-hand knowledge, which is not true knowledge at all. The pupil is not to be told things, he is to apprehend them; he "is not to learn science, but to discover it." Thus Émile is expected to "invent" even geometry—a feat which the child Pascal indeed accomplished, but which must surely be deemed beyond the capacity of any but a transcendent genius. Rousseau's theory is—and for it he seems to have been immediately indebted to the Abbé de Condillac [1]—that the individual should follow the actual steps by which men have reached the arts and sciences, and thus repeating *in petto* the culture-history of the race, rediscover for himself, and through his own experience, the things necessary for living. But as this theory presupposes that each individual is capable, in the course of a single lifetime and by the use of a single brain, of reaching results which have been achieved in thousands of years and by the accumulated efforts of millions of brains, it is obviously untenable; and thus from one point of view education is rightly conceived as a method of economising time and power by the capitalisation of results and their transmission from generation to generation. Yet though Rousseau's doctrine is, as it stands, a piece of sheer extravagance, the historic significance of his argument is not to be overlooked. By proclaiming that the child, instead of being "taught" about things, should be thrown directly back upon nature, and brought to observe, feel, and reflect for himself, he made a bold and much-needed protest against authority and bookishness in education, and pointed forward to a better way. In like manner there is an element of truth in his sweeping attack

[1] *Discours préliminaire sur la Grammaire.*

upon mathematical instruments. "The more ingenious our instruments are, the blunter and more clumsy our organs become." So many of these "have been invented to guide us in our experiments, and to supply the place of accurate sense-perceptions," that in the end, though science may gain, it must be at the expense of our own powers.

All this while, then, the use of books, as aids to education, is systematically discouraged. "I hate books: they merely teach us to talk of what we do not know," and so make, not really learned men, but babblers. One volume only is Émile allowed to read —"a volume which for a long time will itself constitute his whole library, and which will always hold a distinguished place in it"—*Robinson Crusoe*. The reasons which led Rousseau to attach so much importance to this work, and to speak of it as "the happiest treatise on natural education ever written," are not far to seek. Stripped of its romance, the story of the York mariner is a wonderful story of self-help, for it shows how, alone on a desert island, and wholly deprived of the aid of his fellows, a man may yet provide for all his real needs, and establish for himself a condition of sufficient comfort.

One other important item stands on the programme for this third period. Since labour with the hands is that which, of all activities, brings men nearest to a state of nature, Émile must be taught a manual trade, not as a pastime, but in earnest. To labour is the first duty of all men, and every man should gain his bread with the sweat of his brow. "He who eats in idleness what he himself has not earned," exclaims Rousseau, in words which ring out to us from those pre-revolutionary

days with a strangely ominous sound, "steals; and a landowner whom the state pays for doing nothing does not differ from a brigand who lives at the expense of travellers. . . . To work is a duty indispensable to social man. Rich or poor, powerful or weak, every idle citizen is a knave."[1] The trade of cabinet-maker is, after some discussion, chosen as most fitting for Émile; and as he labours at his bench, body and mind learn to work in harmony. Great is the gain, Rousseau considers, when these two parts of our nature are made to provide recreation for one another.

Here, then, is the child at the age of fifteen; and what are the results of the method we have pursued? "Beginning by training the body and the senses, we have now trained the mind and the judgment." We have made of Émile "an active and thinking being." What more is required? In order to complete the man, we must make of him a being who not only acts and thinks, but loves and feels as well—the reason must be perfected through the culture of the feelings. Up to this point the boy knows nothing of mankind, of social relationships, of God. We have formed his body, his senses, his brain. We must proceed to give him a heart.[2]

[1] In his Essay on Political Economy in the *Encyclopédie*, Rousseau had already written—"Every idle citizen is a thief."

[2] This notion of putting a man together piecemeal is to be frequently met with in the philosophy of the eighteenth century. It is, *e.g.*, the essence of Locke's thought. A striking embodiment of the idea is to be found in Condillac's famous fiction of the statue which is endowed with the five senses, one by one. Another and most curious illustration of the same habit of thought, is given in the culture-story of *Automathes*, by Gibbon's tutor, John Kirkby, and the book from which this was plagiarised—the anonymous *History of Autonous*. See the present writer's article, "The Story of Autonous," in the *Popular Science Monthly* for January 1901.

We are now at the age when the passions begin to assert themselves, and when the most careful and judicious handling of nascent instincts and powers is necessary; and this is the point, therefore, at which ethical training may properly commence. Hitherto, in accordance with the foundation principle of progressive education, or education in periods, the child's moral and spiritual nature has been almost entirely ignored—a proceeding which is well calculated to fill us with surprise and alarm. But Émile's moral progress in this fresh stage of experience is marked by the same astonishing rapidity as characterised his mental progress in the stage which has just closed. He has been brought up, we remember, in practical isolation, without family, playmates, friends, and we might expect to see him mature into a profoundly and hopelessly selfish man. Not a bit of it. Though he enters his sixteenth year an absolute individualist without social sentiments, an absolute egoist without feeling for others,—though, at the moment, he has no consciousness of moral guidance, no sense of moral values, and no idea of God,—he is soon made into a gentle, humane, affectionate, conscientious, and religious youth.

Rousseau starts from the principle of pure egoism. The love of self is the source of all our passions, which in a sense are only so many different modifications of this one primordial principle. The aim must therefore be to turn self-love, which is potential alike for good or evil, to the interests of good. The foundations of morality are to be found in the sensibilities. "From the first emotions of the heart arise the first utterances of the conscience, and . . . from the first feelings of

love and hate, the first notions of good and evil. . . Justice and goodness are not merely abstract terms, conceived by the understanding, but real affections of the soul, enlightened by reason." Virtue, as always with Rousseau, is thus essentially an affair of the heart, and it is this thought which dominates Émile's moral training. He is now to be made acquainted with men as they actually are, but as first-hand knowledge would here be fraught with manifold dangers, history is introduced, that through the study of history the youth may learn to know humanity "as a simple spectator" and judge of men, not as their accomplice or accuser. At the same time, the great truth must be made clear to him, that man is naturally good, and that it is society which has corrupted him. Nor must Émile be allowed to remain a mere inert onlooker upon life. As it is by doing good that we learn to be good, he must be interested in all the good deeds that are within his reach; and in particular, he must be led to regard the cause of the poor and oppressed always as his own.

Religious instruction enters the curriculum along with, or soon after, the beginning of moral training. At fifteen, Émile does not know he has a soul; perhaps at eighteen it is early enough for him to learn it, for if he does so sooner than is necessary, says Rousseau in his favourite paradox, he runs the risk of never knowing it at all. For thus leaving Émile a pagan till the very threshold of manhood, he has his reasons. Partly these are to be found in the general doctrine of procrastination. To announce a truth to those who are not intellectually mature enough to receive it, is equivalent to indoctrinating the mind with error.

Moreover, the child is by nature an idolater, and depraved notions of Deity implanted at a time when he is totally unable to grasp the real idea, will remain as ineradicable superstitions throughout life.[1] But now the right time has come, and Émile, who is to be left to choose hereafter for himself among dogmatic creeds, if he finds it necessary to do so, is taught the two great truths of "natural" religion—the existence of God and the soul.[2] The tutor has now obtained a wholly new hold upon the youth's heart. Religion yields its great sanctions to morality. Émile sees his real interest in being good, irrespective of opinions and laws; in doing his duty even at the cost of his life; in maintaining purity of heart for the love of the Creator, which is mingled with the very love of self, and for the lasting happiness which a clear conscience and the contemplation of the Supreme Being will assure him in the life to come.

Here we might suppose that Émile's long tutelage is at last to be brought to a close—that outside supports may be withdrawn, and he may be left to stand by himself. But Rousseau's scheme of education extends much further than this. Émile is now a man, and must be treated as such; he has ceased to be the pupil,

[1] It is not easy to see how Émile can have been kept quite as ignorant of these matters as we are asked to suppose. If not by accidental intercourse, then surely through the reading of *Robinson Crusoe*, he must have had his mind stirred to thoughts of a religious character. The question may also be raised as to whether before this, on Rousseau's own theory, Émile would not have "discovered" religion for himself.

[2] At this point is introduced the famous episode of the Savoyard vicar's confession of faith—at once a mere excrescence upon the story of Émile's development, and our most important document in the study of Rousseau's religious teaching. For both which reasons, we reserve it for analysis by itself in the following chapter.

and has become the disciple of his mentor. But he has still to be guided across the slippery threshold of the world, to be introduced into the society of great cities, and, in particular, to be judiciously married. Locke left his "young gentleman" when he got him safely "within sight of matrimony." Rousseau declines to "imitate Locke in this respect." Émile must be a husband, and the head of a household, before the tutor's comprehensive task can be regarded as complete.

If we were in search of a capital illustration of the way in which preconceived theories will often blind Rousseau to the most obvious realities of life, we might certainly find it in the wholly absurd behaviour of the tutor at this critical juncture. He begins by taking the artless and docile youth into his confidence. He tells him that his heart needs a companion, and that together they are going to seek for one who will be entirely suitable; he warns him that the quest may be a long one, and urges him not to get discouraged; he pictures to him the kind of young woman who alone will meet the requirements. All this mawkish nonsense seems to Rousseau the height of wisdom—Émile, he argues, thus enamoured in advance of the type of perfection required, will be safeguarded from falling recklessly in love with the first attractive young person who chances to cross his path. So much for our philosopher's knowledge of the workings of passion! Sophie—such is the name of good omen chosen for this "not impossible she"—is so amiable, modest, simple, so everything that is right, that, pending her realisation in the flesh, she will preserve her lover's heart intact amid all the temptations by which he will be beset. You marvel, says Rousseau,

that at twenty Émile should be so tractable? "How different our ideas are!" Dazed, we can only acknowledge feebly that indeed they are.

The quest for Sophie, of course, takes Émile and his preceptor far away from the great capital where they have been seeing something of life. They are looking for love, happiness, innocence; and in Paris—renowned city of noise, dirt, and smoke, where women no longer believe in honour, nor men in virtue—love, happiness, and innocence are hardly likely to be found. And here we enter upon the fifth book, which is devoted to the education of women. This, it is generally conceded, is by far the weakest portion of the work. Whatever may be our judgment upon what has gone before, we cannot fail to acknowledge that it is at least fresh, stimulating, prophetic. What Rousseau has to tell us about the training of girls is neither fresh, nor stimulating, nor prophetic. The very reverse of "féministe," he writes from the point of view of the sensualist, who regards woman simply as the female of man—a point of view not surprising in the case of one who had found all the satisfaction which his nature craved in the companionship of Thérèse le Vasseur. Nature, he conceives, has marked off the sexes by the utmost differences imaginable in creatures belonging to the same species; and from this he proceeds to argue as if it were the main business of education, not only to allow for these natural differences, but to accentuate them. Sophie is the antithesis of Émile—all that the one should be the other should not. Woman does not exist for her own sake, and her education is not to be directed to the realisation of her personality; she exists for the sake of man, and

must be trained merely with a view to his happiness. The development aimed at, therefore, is not the development of individuality, but of sex. "The whole education of women ought to be relative to men. To please them, to be useful to them, to make themselves honoured and loved by them, to educate them while young, care for them when they are grown up, advise them, console them, make life pleasant and sweet for them,—such are the duties of women at all times, and these duties should be taught them from infancy. So long as we do not adhere to this principle, we miss the goal." Even the girl's physical health is not to be considered for its own sake, but only for the sake of her male children.

Such being our foundation-principles, details of method may be inferred. Much of the girl's time will necessarily be devoted to preparation for the household duties which will presently devolve upon her. Reading and writing are relatively unimportant, and may safely be postponed to a later date than is commonly assigned for their acquisition. Gentleness and docility are the woman's most desirable moral qualities, and she ought to learn to suffer injustice that she may presently endure the wrongs inflicted by her husband without complaint. Unlike boys, girls are to be taught religion very early, but it is not necessary that the grounds of faith should be explained to them, since with women, religion must always rest on authority. By such rules, and by rules such as these, is Sophie made ready for marriage with Émile, who, when the quest is at length successful, finds her submissive, discreet, a good housekeeper, with a few simple accomplishments, and sundry "feminine" foibles, but of natural manners and happy disposition.

The great thing is, that she is prepared for the subordinate position she will hereafter occupy—that she is ready to merge herself wholly in her husband's personality and become the mother of his sons. One principle has been held in mind throughout her training —as, according to Rousseau, it should be held in mind throughout the training of every girl:—to keep her nature so ductile that her husband may mould and fashion it according to his will. In other words, a woman is to have no character of her own, but only such a character as her master sees fit to give her.

With the meeting of Émile and Sophie, our pedagogic treatise is transformed for a time into a romance of love and courtship in the idyllic-sentimental manner of the *Nouvelle Héloïse.* When at length the youth and maiden are formally betrothed, Émile is sent to complete his education by two years' travel abroad, of course with the inevitable tutor as his companion. It is greatly against his will that he is thus rudely separated from his lady-love, and he gives vent to his distress by shrieks, torrents of tears, and other hysterical demonstrations, which convince us that, whatever else his education may have done for him, it at all events has not trained him in habits of self-control. The purpose of his "philosophic wanderings" is twofold: that the young man may make a study, by direct observation, of foreign manners, customs, laws, politics; and — since Rousseau holds that every man has a right to choose his own country —that he may select the spot for his future home. It is evident that he has plenty to occupy his time, but incidentally, we are told, he contrives to pick up "two or three modern languages." In the end, he

returns to his own country, having learned that for the wise man one place is about as good as another; after which, he marries, and settles down "to a patriarchal country life, the primitive life of man, the most peaceful, natural, and sweet for a man of uncorrupted heart." We leave him just as he realises that he is soon to be made a father. Then, and not till then, do the duties of the indefatigable tutor end. "You have accomplished your task," says Émile to him. "Now rest yourself. It is time." In this closing remark every reader will assuredly concur.[1]

Like almost everything else that Rousseau wrote, *Émile* is charged with a rhetorical quality which greatly detracts from its value as a serious contribution to the discussion of a serious subject; and the faults of his manner—his love of paradox, reckless assertion, and over-emphasis—are everywhere apparent. Beyond which, conceived in a spirit of violent reaction, the work exhibits that tendency to iconoclastic excess which reaction habitually generates. We have spoken of Rousseau as an educational reformer; it would be more correct to describe him as an educational revolutionist. He did not aspire merely to correct the traditional system in these or those particulars. He aimed at its entire destruction. "Adopt the very reverse of current practice," he says in one place, "and you will almost always do right."

Injured by such extravagance of thought and

[1] Rousseau was ill-advised enough to begin a sequel to *Émile*—*Émile et Sophie, ou les Solitaires*—a romance full of absurd situations and violent passions, in which Sophie becomes unfaithful and Émile suffers slavery in Algiers. The purpose of this work—which remains a fragment—was apparently to illustrate the value of the education which Émile had received, and to exhibit the depraving influences of city life.

expression, *Émile* suffers also from its wholly unreal quality. "People will think," Rousseau remarks in his preface, "that they are reading, not so much an essay on education, as the reveries of a visionary on education." This, in fact, is the impression frequently made. Émile, as has been well said, "is a character in a romance rather than a real man."[1] The value of his story as a study of the development of the actual child is ruined by the fact that we do not in the least believe in him as an actual child. First and last, the book is a Utopia. The spell of the imagination is upon it everywhere, sadly to the detriment of its philosophy.

In the very ground-plan of the treatise there are certain fundamental inconsistencies. To one of these we have already drawn attention. A system of education, to be of much practical service, should be devised with a view to the ordinary and normal conditions of life. Rousseau postulates conditions that are extraordinary and abnormal. His representative child, instead of being trained by his parents in the common circumstances of the home-circle, is carried away to a remote country village, and brought up in artificially maintained isolation. It is easy to understand Rousseau's purpose in this — for the uninterrupted evolution of the "natural" man, it was required that Émile should be removed from the disturbing influences of home and the companionship of brothers and sisters, from all customary human associations, from the chances of contamination through bad example. The result of this method of sequestration would, we may suspect, be quite other than that which Rousseau fondly imagines. But that is not now the question. Desirable or not,

[1] Compayré, *History of Pedagogy* (English trans.), p. 289.

the plan is untypical, because in the vast majority of instances impossible. Interesting as the analysis of a wholly exceptional case, *Émile* cannot be accepted as the solution of the practical educational problems of everyday life.[1]

Similar criticism may be passed upon another essential feature of the book—the use made throughout of the tutor. Rousseau's scheme demands that a man of most exceptional character and endowments shall be found, who is willing to sacrifice himself completely during the twenty best years of his life for the making of another man; and if Émile's training is to be taken as representative, then we are to assume that such a tutor shall be forthcoming for every boy who is to be educated. But while, perhaps, we ought not to press this difficulty—for we must yield something to the exigencies of theory—the really important point remains, that the tutor is an utterly illogical intruder into that process of natural growth which is supposed to constitute the very essence of Rousseau's educational creed. Ubiquitous and untiring, alert and watchful, he is not only always at his pupil's side to utilise every incident and extract its moral, but he also manufactures the emergencies, devises the occurrences, plans the surprises, and invents the happy "accidents," by means of which mind and character are to be developed; and thus, like an amateur providence, he overrules every portion of the boy's life. Secretly, if not openly, his influence is exerted everywhere and at all times. The child's freedom, of which so much is made, turns out, therefore, to be apparent only. In point of fact, no child

[1] There is thus greater significance in Julie's account of her method of bringing up her own children, in the *Nouvelle Héloïse*.

could be less free. While he fancies himself under no restraint, he is unceasingly observed, checked, guided. "Let him always be his own master in appearance, but do you take care to be so in reality."[1] Oddly enough, Émile never sees through his preceptor's often puerile artifices, and accepts all his subterfuges as a matter of course. Still the awkward question will arise—What would be likely to happen if once the boy's suspicions were aroused? Of course, the tutor is supposed to be only the agent of nature. But his everlasting interference in the life of the child is in the last degree unnatural.

So glaring are the inconsistencies now touched upon, that to us they may well seem to spoil the work as an exhibition of education conducted according to nature, and thus to upset the very thesis it was written to expound. But the book had too much strength, meaning, vitality, to be ruined by its absurdities of conception and treatment. Rousseau was the prophet of a new educational gospel, and say what we may of *Émile* to-day, it would be difficult, in the whole history of literature, to name any book which has made so profound an impression upon the thought of its time, and the influence of which has proved so wide and lasting.

Beneath all the writer's special theories, it will have been seen, lies his great central thought of a return to nature as the one thing needful in educational reform. "Nature," he asserts again and again in his writings, "made man to be good and happy, while society has made him depraved and miserable"; and to discover

[1] This combination of apparent freedom with constant espionage is found again in Julie's treatment of her children.

what course to pursue in order that man's natural goodness and happiness should be preserved, was, he himself tells us, the germinal principle of *Émile*.[1] Now education, as ordinarily conceived, has simply been an instrument in the hands of society for undoing the benign work of nature. It has crushed virtue; it has inculcated vice; it has bred man in servile prejudices, and fitted him for that slavery to institutions to which civilisation condemns him. But true education should be the instrument of nature, as false education is that of society; recognising the eternal distinction between the good—that is, the natural, and the evil,—that is, the artificial, it should aim to maintain uncorrupted the original state of blessedness and purity. Man has been "dénaturé"—spoilt and sophisticated—by civilised life. Education is the art of making man, but this should mean the "natural" man beneath the conventional product—the true primitive individual, the creature of God and nature. We must not fall into the rather common mistake of assuming that Rousseau ignores society in his pedagogic scheme, and that Émile is to be brought up as if his whole life were to be spent in savage isolation. He himself distinctly declares that such is not the intention—Émile must hereafter become a unit in the social system, and this fact has to be borne in mind, even though it is no part of the function of education to prepare for the special business of citizenship. The problem, therefore, is, how to train the child in such

[1] See *Lettre à Beaumont*. In a letter to Philibert Cramer (*Œuvres et Correspondance Inédites*, ed. Streckeisen-Moultou, pp. 408, 409), Rousseau states that the work is a treatise on the truth that men are naturally good, and an attempt to harmonise this with the not less certain truth that they are actually wicked, by tracing the origin of all the vices through the history of the human heart.

wise that, though hereafter the man shall take his place in civil society, he shall be kept wholly free from the vices of "dénaturalisation." And Rousseau solves this problem by his doctrine of developing the "natural" man, instead of sacrificing such "natural" man in the effort to manufacture the social unit.

It need hardly be said that, considered as a guide to practice, this precept of "following nature" may mean anything or nothing, and can therefore lead only to bewilderment. But a great principle underlies the maxim, and it was the eloquent and fervent enunciation of this principle which made *Émile* count as it did in the intellectual life of its century. A return to nature in education, whatever else it might or might not imply, at least meant certain things which every one could understand. It meant the simplification of the whole scholastic *régime* which had been handed down from the past. It meant the reassertion of wholesome childhood at a time when wholesome childhood was unrecognised, and when boys and girls were forced by hot-house pressure into premature manhood and womanhood. It meant the sweeping away of cramping restraints and clumsy machinery, in order that the spontaneous powers of life might have a chance. It meant all these things, and it is not wonderful that an age which was already growing weary of the parasitic conventions which were everywhere sapping its strength and vitality, should have hailed it as a life-giving word of revelation and prophecy. The publication of *Émile* marks an epoch in the history of thought. Rousseau, as has been said, while the least practical, was at the

same time the most influential of all writers on education.[1]

Of course, he had his masters and precursors. His indebtedness to various writers—to Montaigne, Rabelais, Fénelon, the Abbé de Saint-Pierre, and, most of all, Locke—cannot be overlooked.[2] The germs of many of his ideas were in the air when he wrote; and Turgot anticipated by more than a decade his central doctrine of a return to nature in education.[3] But Rousseau's historic place and influence are not to be measured in terms merely of the originality of his teachings. Even when he dealt with thoughts suggested by others, he made them entirely his own by his method of presentation; saturated with his personality, they took a fresh shape and meaning in his hands. It was his peculiar power and eloquence, his earnestness and his zeal, which were needed to make them tell. What Buffon said in reference to his success in touching the maternal conscience of the time, is true of his work as a whole—the world which had been deaf to others, listened to him.

In any estimate of Rousseau's contributions to the work of educational reform, the following points are perhaps most worthy of attention. He was the first to base education on a study of the child to be educated[4]; the first to break away completely from the renaissance conception of man as a learning and remembering animal;[5] the first to treat education, not as synonymous

[1] Quick, *Educational Reformers*, p. 515.

[2] But his direct debt to Locke is sometimes overstated, as, *e.g.*, by Erdmann, in his *History of Philosophy* (English trans.), ii. 269.

[3] In a letter to Madame de Graffigny (1751).

[4] Quick, *op. cit.*, p. 246.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 519.

with the imparting of knowledge, but as a process of culture and discipline, having as its object the making of a well-rounded human being. He proclaimed the importance of physical training not only for its own sake, but also for the sake of the moral nature.[1] He denounced the bookishness which was a tradition of humanism, and taught that the child should be sent direct to fact. He advocated the substitution of natural discipline for the arbitrary methods of government then in vogue. He urged teachers to watch nature and adjust their machinery to its requirements. And he laid down the principle that education, beyond all things else, must be progressive—a process of spontaneous growth and unfolding, to be assisted, but not interfered with, by art. His own statement of his views is, as we have noted, often absurdly extravagant; he lacks the sense of proportion; his love of paradox misleads him; he spoils his case by rushing to extremes. Yet in surveying his work we cannot fail to realise that nearly all the inspiring ideas of our modern education are ultimately to be traced back to him.

The influence of *Émile* was twofold—it told directly upon society in France and abroad, and it proved a powerful stimulus to other minds. During the twenty-five years which followed its publication, twice as many books on education were issued in the French language, as in the preceding sixty years of the century.[2] Imitations, refutations, corrections without number, continued for many years to show how deeply the public interest had been stirred in the questions

[1] Compare what he says on this subject in his *Considérations sur le Gouvernement de Pologne.*

[2] Compayré, *History of Pedagogy* (English trans.), p. 309.

which Rousseau had opened up. Nearly all the important pedagogical writers of the revolutionary and romantic periods are either to a greater or smaller extent his disciples, or owe much to his inspiration — Kant, Basedow, Pestalozzi, Herbart, Froebel, and Madame Necker, to mention only the names which stand out the most prominently in the annals of the development of modern educational theory and practice.[1] If the importance of a book is finally to be judged by its strength and potency, and if these in turn are to be measured by its life-giving quality— its generative power over many minds — then the place of *Émile* is settled beyond all possibility of controversy. As Mr. Morley has put it, it is "one of the seminal books in the history of literature."[2]

[1] It is usual to add the name of Herbert Spencer to the list. Mr. Spencer is, indeed, often spoken of as a regular disciple of Rousseau, and if not directly asserted, it is implied that he derived many of his principles from *Émile*. But Mr. Spencer himself informs me that at the time his *Education* was written, he had not even heard of the existence of *Émile*, that he has never read it since, and that he knows nothing whatever of any of Rousseau's theories about any matters, save what he has picked up in general reading about the Social Contract. This should be a warning to us not to indulge too recklessly in the common practice of finding "sources" for everybody's ideas.

[2] *Rousseau*, ii. 248.

CHAPTER X

Religious Writings

Rousseau, as we have said, was a man of profoundly religious nature, and amid the widespread persiflage and cynicism of his time he passionately upheld the everlasting reality of spiritual things. A characteristic incident, which occurred at a banquet at Mdlle. de Quinault's, illustrates in a striking way the strength of his feeling and his horror of the flippant unbelief which he everywhere encountered in the fashionable society of the metropolis. A number of brilliant men and women, in the spirit of absolute freedom which reigned on such occasions, had begun by discussing tapestries, and ended by an open assault upon religion. Madame d'Épinay begged them at least to spare natural religion, but Saint-Lambert declined to make any exception in its favour. "What sort of a God is it," he asked, "who first gets angry, and then allows Himself to be appeased?" Rousseau made no attempt to disguise his irritation at the turn which the conversation had taken. "If," he burst out, "it is meanness to permit evil to be spoken of an absent friend, it is a crime to permit it of one's God, who is present. And for my part, gentlemen, I believe in God!" Madame d'Épinay turned to Saint-Lambert. "You, who are a

poet," she said, "will concede that belief in the existence of an eternal, all-powerful, all-wise Being is the source of the most beautiful enthusiasm." "It is the source of all sorts of follies," was the not very poetic response. "Gentlemen," exclaimed Rousseau, "another word, and I leave the room." He had already risen from his seat, but the opportune arrival of a new guest broke up the discussion. Afterwards Madame d'Épinay expressed to Rousseau her surprise and sorrow that Saint-Lambert did not believe in God. "I cannot endure," was Rousseau's reply, "this mania for destroying without building up." He suspected that she shared Saint-Lambert's views. "Belief in God," he told her, "is necessary to happiness, and I desire that you should be happy."[1] It was thus that, in the language of his own Savoyard vicar, Rousseau dared to confess God among the philosophers.

In what he wrote on religion—and to this subject he returned again and again in his work—he was largely inspired by the same purpose; for though in his controversial utterances he made vigorous onslaught upon the theologians, to proclaim God to a generation of scoffers was still one of his chief concerns. Before the publication of *Émile*, he had already defended the ways of Providence against Voltaire, and in the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, as we have seen, had incidentally laid stress upon the supreme importance of belief. But it is to the fourth book of his educational treatise, and to the writings which followed this, that we must turn for the fullest and most carefully reasoned statement of his religious views.

It is well to note the relation of this statement to

[1] *Mémoires de Madame d'Épinay*, i. 374–383.

his own fluctuation in thought, from the Protestantism in which he was bred, to Catholicism in his early youth, and back to Protestantism in later life,—a fluctuation extreme enough, certainly, if it hardly justified the sneer of Diderot that Jean Jacques' opinions swung all the way from atheism to belief in the baptism of bells. How little importance is to be attached to these nominal changes in creed, has already been shown. The point now to be mentioned is that, if we are to accept his own declaration in the matter, Rousseau throughout remained consistently faithful to what he always understood as the "essentials" of religion. This is sometimes regarded as nothing more than one of his many bits of rhetorical rodomontade. But the fact seems to be that, though at different times he may have added to such "essentials" now more and now less of the dogmatic teachings of Protestantism or Catholicism, the true kernel of his faith and the really vital element in it, was always the vague sentimental Deism which took full possession of him at the opening of his intellectual life at Les Charmettes. And it is this vague sentimental Deism which, as we shall now find, forms the substance of the creed set forth at length in *Émile*.[1]

It will be remembered that in the long course of the boy's education, the time finally comes when he must be taught the truths of religion. But here a difficult

[1] Of course it may be asked whether, since it is thrown into dramatic form, this creed is really to be treated as Rousseau's. In the heat of the controversy following the publication of *Émile*, he denied that it was so (*Déclaration relative à M. Vernes*). But elsewhere he acknowledged that the vicar was merely his spokesman. In his reply to Beaumont he declared that he would always regard the *Profession* as the best and most useful production of the century.

problem arises. The churches are many, and each claims for itself unique authority in the settlement of all questions of belief. In what sect, therefore, shall the "man of nature" be trained? The answer is simple—in no sect at all. Émile is not to be brought up in this dogmatic system or in that. He is to be grounded only in the great fundamental principles of natural religion—the principles which form the common basis of all the creeds. If, hereafter, he feels himself in need of a more positive and elaborate faith, it will be his privilege and duty to select one for himself. Upon which Rousseau breaks off to show in what the great fundamental principles of natural religion really consist.

Rousseau chooses as his mouthpiece a poor vicar of Savoy, who, having in earlier life incurred the displeasure of his ecclesiastical superiors, has retired to the mountains, where he is now passing his days in ministering to the needs of the unlettered peasantry.[1] The choice lacks somewhat in dramatic propriety, and the manner in which the priest reconciles his own broad tenets with the forms of Catholic ritual, can hardly be pronounced convincing. But nothing could be more effective than the setting of the episode, and in its style we have Rousseau at his best. The vicar and Jean Jacques, rising at daybreak, climb to the top of a high hill, at the foot of which runs the River Po. Beneath them lies a vast stretch of fertile country, bounded by the distant Alps. The new sun touches the magnificent landscape with its sudden glory; to the two silent spectators the scene is the most beautiful they have ever beheld. "One might have been tempted to think

[1] See *ante*, pp. 18 and 22.

that nature had at that hour unfolded all her grandeur and loveliness as a theme for our conversation." And amid such entrancing and uplifting surroundings, the good priest tells of the principles which have governed his life.

He begins by giving such an account of his career as may serve to explain the nature of the intellectual difficulties by which he had been beset. Craving for the satisfaction which is to be found only in settled faith, he had not known whither to turn for help and guidance in his uncertainties and doubts. The dogmas in which he had been educated altogether failed him, and the writings of the philosophers, whom he found vain and even dictatorial in their scepticism, only multiplied the questions to which he sought a reply. In despair, he determined at length to abandon all the teachers of all the schools, and to go direct to the "innate instructor"—the light within his own breast. The wisdom of this decision was proved by the results; for a simple course of reasoning soon led him step by step to those ultimate truths in which ever since he had been content to rest.

He now proceeds to show us how these truths were reached. Starting from the undeniable fact of his own existence—a fact which it is impossible to expunge from consciousness—he begins by recognising two categories,—himself, and that which lies beyond himself. This latter he calls matter. Now matter receives and transmits motion; which motion is the effect of a cause. The cause of motion is sometimes mechanical or communicated, sometimes spontaneous or voluntary. But matter is moved by communicated motion—the cause is outside matter itself. "The

universe is not a huge, self-moving animal, but receives its motion from some foreign cause, which we do not perceive. But I am so strongly persuaded within myself of the existence of this cause, that it is impossible for me to observe the apparent diurnal revolution of the sun without conceiving that some force must urge it forward; or, if it be the earth itself which turns, then I cannot but think of some hand that turns it." The action and reaction of the forces of nature are merely effects; we must seek their cause in volition. "I believe that a Will gives motion to the universe and animates all nature. This is the first article of my faith."

But the movements of the universe clearly follow certain laws, and these laws imply intelligence. "I believe that the world is governed by wise and powerful will"—volition guided by mind. "I see it, or rather, I feel it." This, then, is "the second article of my faith." But is the world eternal or created? Is there a single principle in things, or are there two or more principles? And what is their nature? To these questions the vicar will attempt no answer. They transcend his intelligence, and their solution is not essential to conduct; for which reasons they may be left alone. Let it suffice that the universe is certainly formed on one plan; that, as it is not in our power to conceive that passive, inanimate matter could ever have generated living and sensible creatures, or that blind chance should have produced intelligent beings—that which cannot think originating that which does think —we must needs believe in one intelligent Power regulating and upholding all. This Power, whose will is itself deed, who is active in Himself, who—whatever He

may be—moves the universe and orders all things,—the vicar calls God. To this God he attributes intelligence, will, and power, because he has derived the conception of these from his observation of things. But he does not therefore dare to dogmatise concerning the essence of the Eternal Being. He perceives Deity in his workings, but Deity Himself eludes the strongest efforts of his imagination. Hence, unlike the theologians, he will not discuss the nature of God.

Having thus established the great truth of God's existence, the vicar turns to humanity. Man is evidently the lord of creation; and yet, while the lower animals are happy, man, their sovereign, is miserable. How are we to explain this with reference to Supreme Wisdom and Beneficence? in other words —for it is the immemorial problem of evil which we have here upon our hands—how are we to reconcile the facts of man's present state with our doctrine of an all-wise, all-good, and all-powerful Deity? The vicar finds his clue in the twofold nature of humanity. Man is not a simple being. Contrary forces struggle for mastery within him—one lifting him to the highest regions of aspiration; the other subjecting him to sense and passion. But he has always within himself, as he is fully aware, the power of choice between this and that. Therefore, man is a free-will agent, and, as a free-will agent, he is "animated by an immaterial substance." This is "the third article of my faith." By considerations which, however they may strike the modern reader, seem to him absolutely satisfactory, the vicar has reached the two great truths of God and the soul. Moreover, as a free-will agent man acts spontaneously; his actions are not part of the

general scheme of Providence; and the evil of life is the result of our abuse of the liberty which the Creator has given us. "Man, no longer inquire then who is the author of evil. . . . It is yourself. . . . Take away our disastrous improvements, abandon our errors and vices, strip off the work of man, and all is good."

Let us be virtuous; we may rest assured that we shall be happy. "It is not in the lists," says Plutarch, who is here quoted with approval, "that the victors in our games are crowned, but after the course is run." The soul, being immaterial, may survive the body; and if so, Providence is justified. So much discord exists in the general harmony of things, the just are so often oppressed, the wicked so often triumph, that we are inevitably led to believe in a life to come. It would be hard to say whence man first obtained the idea of his immortality, and futile to speculate on the details of the life after death. But the vicar *feels* that he has a soul, and does not fear to indulge in the faith that it will survive the body, for a time if not for ever, since such faith is consolatory and not unreasonable. The virtuous here will undoubtedly find their reward hereafter; as for the wicked—where is the use of asking if their punishment will be eternal, when hell is already in their hearts?

Such being the principles of his creed, the vicar goes on to show their influence upon his conduct. His aim must be to fulfil his destiny in accordance with the design of Eternal Wisdom which placed him on earth. He must therefore at all times listen to his conscience, and obey its commands. Conscience is the voice of the soul, as the passions are the voice of the

body; it is to the soul what the instincts are to our physical life. It never deceives. Follow conscience, and you follow nature, and cannot go wrong.

This ends the first, or positive part of the vicar's profession. The second, or negative part, deals with various tenets of the orthodox Christian creed.

To the vicar natural religion appears sufficient. Revelation is unnecessary, for it can add nothing to what we can learn for ourselves by the use of our faculties and from the dictates of our hearts. "Observe the spectacle of nature—listen to the inner voice. Has not God said everything to our eyes, our conscience, our judgment? What more will men tell us? Their revelations only degrade God by giving Him human passions. Far from illuminating our ideas of the Great Being, their particular dogmas confuse them. . . . They render men proud, intolerant, cruel. . . . I ask what good all this can subserve, and there is no answer. I see in it only the crimes of men and the miseries of the human race." The strife of the theologians, the controversies of the schools, the ceaseless squabbles of the sects, are all absurd. The worship God demands is the worship of the heart; ceremonials, genuflections, formulas, are of no importance.

Miracles, which are often adduced as proofs of alleged revelation, have no value as evidence, since they themselves have to be substantiated. To support doctrine by miracle, and then miracle in turn by doctrine, after the very common practice, is to go endlessly round and round in a vicious circle. Is the matter improved by adoption of the Catholic position —the authority of the Church? Assuredly not. For what does this come to? The Church decides that it

has the right to decide—a pretty proof of "authority," forsooth!

Nor can the vicar believe in a God who began by selecting a single people and proscribing the rest of the race. Such an one cannot be called the Father of mankind, and if He destines to eternal torment the greater number of His creatures, He is not the good and merciful Being revealed to us by reason. The familiar difficulty of the fate of heathen who never heard the glad tidings by which alone, it is alleged, men may be saved, is stated by the vicar with much force.

Reason must test everything, including the supposed revelation. A religion shrouded in mysteries and contradictions at once inspires distrust. The God we admire is not a God of darkness; He gave us understanding that we might use it, and to bid us extinguish its light is to insult Him.

The vicar, however, does not go so far as to reject revelation. He holds his judgment in reserve. What he does reject is the pretended obligation of accepting revelation; such pretended obligation being incompatible with the justice of God. His attitude towards the Scriptures, therefore, is an attitude of reverent doubt. Their majesty astonishes him; the holiness of the gospel appeals to his heart; the purity and sweetness of the character of Jesus and the sublimity of His teachings seem to him truly divine. If the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of the Founder of Christianity were those of a God. Yet with so much that is beautiful and engaging, these same gospel-records abound in incredible incidents and in statements opposed to reason.

Hence the "involuntary scepticism" in which the vicar finds himself compelled to rest—scepticism by no means painful to him, since it does not extend to any matters essential to practice, and leaves him—with a mind absolutely assured concerning conduct and duty—to serve God in all the sincerity of his faith. "My son," he says in conclusion, "let your heart always desire that there may be a God, and you will never doubt it. For the rest, whatever course you adopt, remember always that the true duties of religion are independent of the institutions of men; that a just heart is the real temple of divinity; that in every country and sect to love God beyond all things else and one's neighbour as one's self is the sum of the law; that there is no religion which dispenses with the principles of morality; that nothing is essential save these; that inward worship is the first of such principles; and that without faith no true virtue can exist."

In that portion of his reply to the Archbishop of Paris which deals with religious questions, Rousseau restates many of the foregoing principles with variations of phraseology and argument. Again, he insists upon the worthlessness of miracles as proofs of doctrine, and upon the unsubstantial character of the foundations on which the Catholic Church has reared its immense claim to be the authoritative interpreter between God and men. But he now proclaims himself a Christian —not as a disciple of the priests, but as a disciple of Christ, who preached good works rather than formulas of belief, and taught through one of His apostles that whoso loves his brother fulfils the law. Love of God and love of man are indeed the essential elements in

Christianity. But as religions grow older, their real objects disappear; doctrinal subtleties encroach, dogmas multiply and grow; the moral truth is lost sight of. Instead of teaching duty, the priests of all churches waste their time in disputes, and the question asked of the Christian is—not if he fears God, but if he is orthodox? Provided he accepts all sorts of useless and unintelligible formulas, he may live pretty much as he likes.

But now let us suppose, suggests Rousseau, that, weary of the conflict of the churches, reasonable men of all creeds assembled for the purpose of finding a common religion for all. Of course they would begin by each offering his own as the one true faith. But when each had in turn been proposed by its adherents and rejected by all the rest, and when, upon this first failure, all the theologians had been turned out of the conference, discussion would soon reveal certain foundation principles upon which Christian, Jew, and Turk could all unite. The first article of their faith would be, that all men should treat each other with brotherly love; the second, that they have a universal Father, maker of heaven and earth; the third, that man is a mixed being, composed of two elements, one mortal, the other immortal. These tenets would serve to unite men of all countries and sects in the bonds of union. For the rest, all cults must be regarded as good when prescribed by the laws of different lands, provided always that the above essentials of true religion are found within them. Cults are the police of religion, not religion itself; hence they appertain to the regulations of the countries which adopt them. In this way Rousseau seeks to solve the problem of the

relations between universal religion—religion in its essence, pure and undefiled—and the concrete religious systems of the world, which derive their vitality directly from the eternal truth contained in them, though in the course of their development such truth has been overlaid by manifold rites and forms.

Over the matters of controversy started in *Émile* and handled anew in the reply to Beaumont, Rousseau goes yet once again in his *Lettres de la Montagne*. In these his manner is far more aggressive, particularly in what he says on the question of miracles. That God could perform miracles if He would, he takes for granted, since to doubt this would be impious if it were not absurd. But would He? And if so, how could we be certain of the occurrence of a miracle? Do we understand enough of the operations of nature to be able to decide when a given fact is "supernatural," or only natural in some way new to us? Europeans have passed for gods among savages: a man with a knowledge of electricity would, a century ago, have been burned as a wizard or followed as a prophet. In any event, a miracle could never be any evidence of religious truth. Such evidence must be sought in the nature of the doctrine itself, and in the characters of those who preach it. Rousseau can understand neither the certainty nor the utility of miracles. He will not out-and-out deny them; but he is profoundly sceptical. On the other hand, he expresses the highest esteem and veneration for the person and teachings of the Founder of Christianity Himself. In brief, his argument comes pretty much to a declaration of Christianity without supernaturalism — that is, of Christianity as the religion of nature. He himself

explains that the purpose of all his religious writing had been to disengage religion from dogma and superstition. Thus we return to the tenets of the Savoyard vicar's profession of faith. And if, Rousseau now asks, this profession were accepted in all parts of the world, what would be the result? In outward forms there would be no change at all, but there would be a vast change in the hearts and lives of men. Rousseau's teaching, in other words, need not interfere in the slightest details with the established religious systems of the world; but it would make the fundamental verities of universal religion—the essential truths without which no system is really alive—once more vital forces in the destinies of individuals and societies.

As a religious teacher Rousseau met the fate which a hundred years later was to overtake Matthew Arnold —his declaration of faith, for all his irenical intentions, was denounced at once as too orthodox by the heterodox, and too heterodox by the orthodox. It was, indeed, admirably calculated to incense both the powerful parties which between them represented the *prestige* and intellect of the time—the ecclesiastical party and the philosophical party. It is true that Jacob Vernet applied to him Tertullian's famous phrase, *Anima naturaliter Christiana*, and that there were others within the Church who saw in him a free-lance fighting on their side, and honoured him for daring to proclaim his faith in God in a century of atheism. But these were exceptions; for the majority of the religious leaders not only condemned the anti-Christian utterances of the vicar, but even regarded them as more dangerous, through their insinuating rhetoric,

than the brutally outspoken unbelief of the avowed atheists themselves. On the other hand, the *philosophes* fell foul of this new exponent of naturalistic religion, because he conceded too much to their opponents, spoke too reverently of the special doctrines which they scouted, and openly turned the batteries of his eloquence against their own positions. Thus Rousseau contrived to antagonise both extremes of opinion. The first part of the vicar's confession embroiled him with the philosophers, the second with the theologians.[1]

It is on the former side—as declared opponent of the spirit of the *Encyclopédie* and the fundamental principles of the new philosophy—that Rousseau, in his capacity of religious teacher, has now most interest for us. As he told the Archbishop of Paris, one of his chief purposes in formulating the *Profession de foi* had been "to combat modern materialism and establish the existence of God." Nor did he mistake the signs of the times in believing that it was the prime duty of those who had the interests of religion at heart to sink minor differences and unite in its defence. Walpole was horrified by the openness and fanaticism with which the *savants* of Paris preached against religion—one of their lady-devotees, he wrote to Gray, had sneered even at

[1] Rousseau was by no means consistent in his attitude towards Christianity. In the *Contrat Social* (bk. iv. chap. viii.), he spoke of it, from the political point of view, as injurious to the State, and, as inculcating only servitude and dependence, incompatible with civic duty and patriotism. Yet in the *Profession de foi*, and in the controversial writings which followed *Émile*, he recognised the indebtedness of modern societies to the Gospel. A fragment dating from towards the end of his life, and published by Streckiesen-Moultou in his *Œuvres et Correspondance Inédites de Rousseau*, suggests that his thought was then undergoing favourable change towards Christian revelation.

Voltaire, who no longer satisfied the advanced party, as "bigot" and "déiste"; [1] while Voltaire himself was seriously alarmed at the spread of atheism, which he regarded as "dangerous to society." [2] It was the ever-increasing power and influence of the mechanical science which reduced the universe to a gigantic machine, and left no place in it for God or soul, that brought Rousseau to the rescue. With the enthusiasm of a mystic and the zeal of a prophet he denounced the rationalists and all their works, and proclaimed to a flippant world the divine mystery of things. "Fly from those," exclaims the vicar, at the close of his confession, "who, professing to explain nature, sow desolating doctrines in the minds of men, and whose scepticism is a hundred times more affirmative and dogmatic than the positive tone of their adversaries. Under the haughty pretence that they alone are enlightened, truthful, of good faith, they imperiously submit us to their trenchant decisions, and offer us as the true principles of things the unintelligible systems which they have constructed in their imaginations. For the rest, overthrowing, destroying, rolling under foot everything which men respect, they snatch from the afflicted the last consolation of their misery, from the powerful and rich the only check upon their passions; they tear from the heart remorse for crime and the hope of virtue; yet still boast themselves the benefactors of the human race. Never, they declare, is truth harmful to men. I believe it; and this, in my

[1] Letter to Gray, 19th November 1765.

[2] Voltaire replied to d'Holbach's materialistic *Système de la Nature*, in his article "Dieu," in the *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, and exposed the character and effects of atheism in his *Histoire de Jenni*.

opinion, is a great proof that what they teach is not truth!"

Rousseau's early Protestant training had left permanent influences upon his mind, and to this we may trace in particular his veneration for the Bible, and his insistence upon the right of individual interpretation—a right which to him meant freedom, not only to explain according to one's lights, but also to rest in doubt concerning passages of which the sense is ambiguous, and to leave such as are incomprehensible altogether alone. But though recognition of this Protestant element in his thought is necessary if we desire to investigate the derivation of his ideas, the significance of his work inheres as much in his repudiation of the Protestant as in his reaction against the Catholic position. Here, as elsewhere, his aim was to emancipate the individual from systems and schools, and to throw him back wholly upon himself; to get rid of external authority—be it that of Church or book—and to teach men that second-hand inspiration is useless, and that, each one for himself, they must seek their own revelation of the divine. Theologians had built up creeds, philosophers had constructed systems; and the result thus far had been anarchy and conflict. And, meanwhile, the true Bible was open to all eyes in the great book of nature itself. "It is in this vast and sublime volume that I learn to serve and adore its divine Author. No one can be excused for not reading it, since it speaks to all men in a language intelligible to every mind."

The way of faith preached by Rousseau is thus perfectly simple. Sweeping away all the machinery of the past, upon which, to the destruction of their true religious life they had come more and more to depend,

he taught men to go straight to nature, and to trust their own hearts in the interpretation of her oracles. They were to "look through nature up to nature's God"; the *sentiment inné*, the *voix intérieure*, the *dictamen interne*—in such phrases he describes the spiritual illumination and power of the soul itself—were at all times to be their guide. Thus they could not fail to reach the truth, and the satisfaction which the truth alone can yield. Rousseau admits that he could understand how dwellers in the city, among walls, streets, and crimes, should lack religious faith; he could not understand such lack in those who live in the country, and whose hearts, he felt, must rise a hundred times a day in utter ecstasy toward the Author of all the marvels which surround them. There for him lay the ultimate secret of man's apprehension of the divine. Human institutions, philosophies, creeds, were one and all fatal to the true religious life. The God of nature was ever nigh to the heart of man, if only the heart of man would lay itself open to the inflowing of the divine power.

It is easy to belittle Rousseau's contributions to the religious literature of his time. His teachings were vague and unsubstantial; grandiose phrases were too often in them allowed to fill the place of positive thought; his philosophy rests on nothing but sentiment; his religion is an affair wholly of the heart. Moreover, it may be urged, the historic importance of this portion of his work may be exaggerated. There is not a new thought in the *Profession de foi;* in the positive part, the vicar only develops the arguments of Descartes, Fénelon, Leibnitz, and especially the "illustrious" Clarke; in the negative part, his criticism of

revelation and miracles merely restates what had often been said by others, and had indeed become a commonplace in the free-thought writings of the century. All this is true. But Rousseau's place and power are none the less beyond dispute, though they depend upon the informing presence of an element which unfortunately has to be left out in any mere analysis or summary of his productions—the fervent eloquence which gave wings to his words and made them potent to stir the hearts of men. He must be classed as a Deist as Voltaire is classed as a Deist; but his Deism is a vastly different thing from Voltaire's. To his great rival, God was a logical necessity—if He did not exist, it would still be necessary to invent Him! The God of Rousseau was a living God. In that phrase we touch the spirit of his work. And it was not the originality of his teachings, but the high passion wherewith he charged them, which gave them their power and influence over his own generation, and that which immediately followed his own.

CHAPTER XI

Rousseau as Epoch-maker

The main points of what, for want of a better name, we have been bound (though perhaps a little too grandiloquently) to describe as Rousseau's philosophy of life, together with the general nature and direction of his influence, have, it is hoped, been made sufficiently clear by the foregoing brief analyses of his more important writings. It now remains for us to summarise his doctrines as a whole, and to consider a little more particularly his place and power as an historic figure and social force.

The very corner-stone of all Rousseau's thought is furnished by his fundamental antithesis of Nature and Culture or Civilisation, and by the, to him, axiomatic truth that everything good belongs to the former, while everything evil is the product of the latter. This is the germ of all his practical teaching, the essence of which may be condensed into the single comprehensive principle that civilisation is a colossal blunder, and that in a return to Nature is to be found our only way of escape from the follies, the wickedness, and the misery of our present lot.

But what are we to understand by the "Nature" of which so much is thus made, and which we are asked

to accept as at once absolute standard and universal ideal? It is not easy to give a satisfactory answer to this question. "Nature," as we all know, has long been one of the best abused of words; it has been employed so frequently, and with such reckless disregard of definition, by writers of so many different schools, that it has become almost a hopeless task to fix, even approximately, its true philosophic meaning.[1] And such being our initial difficulty, it is evident that we could not look for help to a writer so impassioned, paradoxical, and inconsistent as Rousseau, who indeed only adds to the confusion by himself using the word in shifting senses, and slipping from one to another without the slightest consciousness of the change.[2] But though the rhetorical vagueness and uncertainty of his language must constantly baffle the student bent on strict logical analysis, it is still a fairly simple matter to formulate the large, general ideas always dominating his mind. Nature with him is everywhere synonymous with the eternal order of things—with life in its fundamental reality; and, as such, is placed in everlasting opposition to man's

[1] How vast are the variations of significance attached to this word, will be realised by any English reader who takes the trouble to compare the use of it in Pope's *Essay on Criticism* with that in Wordsworth's *Prelude*.

[2] Höffding, in his *Rousseau og hans Filosofi* (pp. 93 *et seq.*), analyses Rousseau's use of the word "Nature" in great detail, and attempts to show that it has three quite different sources and meanings — a theological, an anthropological (*naturhistoriske*), and a psychological. In the first case, Nature stands for the "simplicity and harmony" of the universe as opposed to man's vicious handiwork; in the second, for the primitive condition of humanity as opposed to civilisation; in the third, for the essential manhood of the individual as opposed to the artificial product of culture and society.

handiwork, or "artifice," and, therefore, to all that is comprehended under the terms culture, society, the inventions and institutions, the manners and customs of civilisation. This, baldly stated, is the conception underlying the early discourses, with all their fantastic declamation and windy extravagances; the doctrines of education set forth in *Émile;* the naturalistic religion proclaimed in the *Profession de foi;* the theories of government developed in the *Contrat Social;* the practical morality inculcated in the *Nouvelle Héloïse.* And if, disregarding all minor questions and issues, we seize upon this broad idea of Nature as the central principle in Rousseau's thought, we shall have no difficulty in understanding the full significance of that "return to Nature" which from first to last he insisted upon as the one thing necessary for the individual and for society. To get back to Nature means, to strip life clean of all that is merely temporary, factitious, and accidental; to cut down through forms and formulas, artifices, and traditions, to the primal reality which they have completely overlaid; to sweep away the accumulated rubbish of ages of folly, error, and crime; to rebuild upon first principles, elemental facts, vital truths; to seek always the essential reason behind the delusive show of things; to disentangle the fundamental manhood of men from the complex mass of parasitic fashions and conventions by which it has been well-nigh destroyed; to turn from the oracles of society to the voice of one's own heart, which, however corrupted by education and surroundings, is yet inherently good; to be true to one's own character; to set aside accepted standards of conduct, obey the primitive instincts, and render allegiance only to the universal laws of life.

All this is implied in Rousseau's gospel of a "return to Nature," though the stress is laid now upon one aspect of his general doctrine, and now upon another. All this we must recognise as essential to that gospel, if we would properly estimate its importance and understand the sources of its power.

To a large extent, as will be seen, Rousseau's teaching is purely reactionary. He attacked civilisation and progress; he struck fiercely at the social order; he abused the sciences and the arts; he sought his ideal in a pre-social condition of humanity, and among savages whom we should consider low down in the scale of life. Upon the absurdity of such vagaries it is needless, of course, to dwell. His unmeasured denunciation of the existing state of things was full of inconsistencies and contradictions, which clearly enough revealed its utter lack of any firmly laid philosophical foundation. His postulated primitive state of innocence was, like the golden age of the classic poets, wholly unhistorical; while the noble savage who, after his time, was destined to stalk through so many thousands of sentimental pages, shaming the white man by his strength and purity, was singularly unlike any savage yet discovered—a fantastic and impossible creature bred by imagination in revolt against the man of civilisation. And in so far as Rousseau's philosophy sprang from mere rebellion against established social conditions, the proposed attempt to undo such conditions and destroy in the mass the inheritance of the ages, which was involved in it upon the practical side, was manifestly as futile as the philosophy itself. Are we to abandon civilisation and get back to Nature? Then, we ask in return, how far is the reaction to carry us? Are we to

stop anywhere till we reach at length that four-footed state to which Voltaire modestly regretted that he was too old to revert?[1] "God made the country, and man made the town,"[2] we are told by the gentle English poet who expressed so many of Rousseau's ideas. Well and good, we retort with the wise and witty Autocrat of the Breakfast Table; but it is equally true that "God made the cavern, and man made the house." Once more, how complete is this destruction of the work of civilisation to be? What, if anything, of our social order and its culture, is to be left us? Where, if anywhere, are we to draw the line at which Nature becomes too "natural" to be quite satisfactory, and which, therefore, we may properly decline to overpass? To these questions there is no reply.

But wildly extravagant as were Rousseau's utterances as a prophet of chimerical Utopias, they nevertheless contained in embryo the first great principles of that whole democratic movement which he did so much to initiate, and which was to accomplish such astonishing results in the half-century immediately following his death. If he indignantly compared savage with civilised, to the immense disadvantage of the latter; if he postulated a primitive age of innocence and equality as an offset to the corruption and monstrous class-disparities of the society in which he lived; if he returned again and again to the glaring distinction between "l'homme de l'homme" and "l'homme naturel,"—it was not merely that he might indulge a whim by painting fancy pictures of what never has been and never can be, nor was it simply to startle the

[1] See *ante*, p. 129, note 1.

[2] Cowper, *The Task*, bk. i. l. 749.

world by theories as untenable as they were novel and alluring. Beneath all his paradoxes and his vagaries there was a deep moral lesson, which bore directly upon the conscience of the time. Air-spun and visionary as many of his ideas might be, he at least taught his readers to recognise the difference between the genuine qualities of manhood and all those accidents of birth, place, and fortune which are commonly held of the first importance; he at least led them to value the individual himself, in all the simplicity of his essential nature, rather than the complex social product. Tearing away all the merely artificial and fortuitous wrappings of conventional life, he thus laid bare the broad humanity which is common to lettered and unlettered, noble and peasant, king and clown. How much this meant in an age that lived only among the wrappings, and knew nothing and cared nothing for the fundamental facts which they concealed, it is difficult now to conceive. Simplification, as Mr. John Morley has said, was the keynote of the revolutionary time; and Rousseau's whole power told in the direction of simplification. Nor, in the development of his thesis, did Rousseau spend himself in a world of logical abstractions. By his passionate protest against what man has actually "made of man"; by his vehement and oft-repeated attack upon concrete abuses; by his prophetic denunciation of the greed, callousness, and depravity of those who sat in high places; by his eloquent appeals on behalf of the poor, toiling, down-trodden masses, "groaning without hope under the burden of oppressions,"—he lifted high the standard of the new democracy, and led the way, a true "soldier of humanity," in the great work of social regeneration.

No man's labour can be rightly judged out of relation to local and temporary conditions, and to form any adequate idea of the originality and power of Rousseau we must understand something of the moral and intellectual character of the age and society in which he lived and for which he wrote. The eighteenth century—the century of *Aufklärung* or Enlightenment—was, to speak in general terms, a period of hard and arid rationality, when the intellect reigned supreme, when the emotions were repressed or ignored, and when, in Madame de Tencin's epigrammatic phrase, the majority of men had no heart, but only another brain beneath the left breast. Everything was seen under the chill white light of reason, and tested by the universal criterion of common sense. Cold, sceptical, cynical in its attitude towards the deeper problems of existence, the age was, at the same time, in its daily thoughts and habits, epicurean, frivolous, flippant, torpid, self-complacent. The sources of the stronger feelings had long been dried up; zeal and enthusiasm were impossible, and, had they been possible, would have been sneered and scoffed at. The free play of passion and individuality was everywhere checked by the rigid formalism which held society in an iron grasp. Life had become stereotyped and artificial to an almost inconceivable extent, and was governed, in large things and small, by elaborate conventions and rules. And, as was inevitable under such wholly unhealthy conditions, a widespread contempt for great moral principles was meanwhile sapping the foundations of the established order. Among the wealthy and cultured classes of the French capital, the honour of the home was practically unrecognised, and men and women alike

talked and lived in shameless indifference to the marriage tie.

Against the dominating spirit of his era—against the *Zeitgeist* of the eighteenth century—in all its manifold expressions in life and thought, Rousseau threw himself with the fervour and persistency of one divinely chosen to proclaim to men the way of salvation from an impending doom. Himself a plebeian of the plebeians, with a general view of life fashioned largely by the Puritanism of his native Geneva, and reinforced by his boundless admiration for the stoicism of Sparta and Rome, he set before a luxurious and effeminate generation an ideal of antique simplicity wholly antagonistic to all the commonly accepted standards of existence.[1] He taught a world, hitherto blind to such things, to see and to enjoy the beauties of nature. He led men from the noisy city streets into the peaceful solitudes of the country,[2] and stimulated them to meditation there over the problems of sin and destiny.

[1] It is curious, considering the essential virility of all Rousseau's teachings, and his frequent protest against feminine ascendancy, that his direct influence upon women should have been so great as it was. His personal power over them—as in the cases of Madame de Warens, Madame d'Épinay, and the Comtesse d'Houdetot—has already been remarked. Later, to mention a few only of the more prominent, Charlotte Corday, Madame Roland ("le Jean Jacques des femmes"), Madame Cottin, Madame de Genlis, and George Sand, have to be reckoned among his followers. Such women were doubtless attracted to Rousseau as the interpreter of the classic, in contrast with the Gothic or mediæval, type of womanhood. This seems quite natural when we remember the classicism (often exhibited in the absurdest pedantry) which characterised the whole revolutionary age.

[2] Arthur Young speaks of its being a new fashion in France for wealthy people to spend a part of each year at their country seats, "a custom," he says, introduced from England, "and assisted by the magic of Rousseau's writings" (*Travels in France* (Bohn's ed.), p. 84).

To the frivolity of the *salons* he opposed a strenuous earnestness and high sincerity—to its cynicism, a resolute optimism, resting upon unshaken faith in God and the worth of our earthly career. Everywhere about him love had degenerated into frigid gallantry, or been swamped by licentiousness. He—of all men in the world—made the sanctity of the home his constant theme, and dwelt unremittingly upon the domestic virtues. He taught the eternal verities of a natural religion to a society which had lost both faith and reverence, and treated all serious things as subjects for persiflage and ridicule. Sentimentalist in the midst of the dryest rationalism and intellectuality, he did more than any other man to emancipate the emotions and reinstate the heart. And to those who were bound hand and foot by formulas and conventions, he spoke with seductive eloquence of the personal freedom and the largeness of life which might be found beyond the cramping restraints of the social régime.[1]

Thus at almost every point Rousseau stood in hostility to the prevailing ideals and forces of his century, and by the immense power of his personality, by his courage, zeal, and eloquence, he drove home the doctrines he had set himself to teach far and wide into

[1] It may be worth while just to notice in this place the absurdity of the association in everyday thought and speech of the names of Rousseau and Voltaire. The two men had, of course, hardly an idea or ideal in common ; they stood for diametrically opposed views of life ; their enormous influence told upon society in totally different directions. Their one point of historic connection lies simply in this, that each in his own way was a powerful solvent of the established order, and a forerunner of the Revolution. Beyond this, to link them together is, as Erdmann neatly puts it, to treat fire and water as "the same thing, because they both destroy man's handiwork" (*History of Philosophy* (English trans.), ii. 270.)

the minds of men. Nor must we conceive of his great work as having consisted only in the promulgation of new ideas. This would be to overlook a most essential part of its significance. His historic importance is due quite as much to the enormous change wrought by him in the very atmosphere of life. That atmosphere, hitherto so bleak and chilly, he charged with fresh emotions of electrical power, with desires, cravings, and passions which stirred the innermost soul of the age. As we study the literature of the second half of the eighteenth century, decade by decade, we are conscious of an ever-increasing spiritual warmth, of a growing intensity of feeling, of a more and more free and rapid coursing of the blood through all the arteries of life. All this, we know, was a premonition of the great romantic outburst which was to mark the century's close. And much of all this was due, directly or indirectly, to the influence of Rousseau.

Yet, while insisting to the full upon the extraordinary strength and originality manifested by our author in his complete break with the spirit of the time, we must not forget that in many respects the world was ready for the gospel which he brought. His was another case of the hour and the man. Dry and cynical, flippant and spiritually apathetic as the age of *éclaircissement* was, it had nevertheless given unmistakable indications that it was already growing weary of its obsolescent ideals, its emotional barrenness, its self-imposed restraints and limitations. Jaded in the midst of its much-vaunted culture and refinement, restless and ill at ease in spite of its characteristic self-complacency, and by no means unconscious of, however

much it might strive to ignore, the moral corruption within its gates, it had aspirations which it hardly understood towards a fresher and larger play of passion, yearnings after a satisfaction other than that yielded by its formal scheme of life, a half-realised sense of the beauty and grandeur of a social order purer and nobler than its own. In wholly unexpected places and ways, in the literature of the first fifty years of the century, we find expression given to the spirit of reaction and revolt — in *Robinson Crusoe*, for example, and Gay's burlesque operas, in *Gulliver's Travels*, in *Le Diable Boiteux* of Le Sage, and the *Lettres Persanes* of Montesquieu, and in innumerable minor writers, English and French. Rousseau, therefore, did not appeal to deaf ears. He found an audience to some extent prepared for him—a fact to be remembered in any attempt to account for the immense effect of his teachings. And what marvel that after so many years of emotional repression, the feelings, when once liberated, should assert themselves with almost despotic power? That the cold and formal age of enlightenment should be followed by an age of crude and mawkish sentimentalism? That the primitive energies of manhood, long restrained and now set free, should generate that "erregte Trotzgefühl" — that fierce spirit of hostility to accepted traditions—of which Goethe speaks, and bring into literature as into life all the unbounded extravagances of an era of general revolt?

In considering Rousseau historically, it is very necessary to lay stress upon this point, that he did not suddenly and by himself initiate a totally new period in the world's development. We have to be very

careful when we come to deal with any man as epoch-maker—as the leader or most prominent representative of a great movement in society or thought—lest we should fall into the quite common and natural mistake of grouping all the facts of such movement about his personality as centre, and thus destroying all sense of true perspective and relationships. The most striking individual figures in history—the men whom we are apt to think of as having unaided changed the currents of our destinies—have really owed much of their vast influence to the way in which they have gathered up and given strength and meaning to obscure and scattered forces in the life of their time; and though our love for the dramatic and the picturesque inclines us inevitably to the "great man" view of human affairs, the simple fact of the matter is that no one has ever been quite the first to do anything since the world began. There was Rousseauism before Rousseau, and there was Rousseauism irrespective of him in his own age and in that which succeeded his own. His great principle of Nature against Civilisation was already in the air. Buffon had taught, before him, that virtue belonged rather to man in his savage condition than to man in organised societies. Delisle, in his *Arlequin Sauvage,* as far back as 1721, had denounced the folly of seeking a multitude of useless objects, when Nature stands freely open to the enjoyment of all. Before one of Rousseau's greater works had appeared, Morelly was seeking the bases of civil society and law in the code of Nature.[1] In England, whence,

[1] See his *Basiliade,* 1753, and particularly his *Code de la Nature,* 1755. This latter remarkable little book was published anonymously, and was once printed in a collective edition of Diderot's works.

as we have seen, came directly so much of Rousseau's inspiration, many of the fundamental doctrines which we now associate with his name, took shape and found a varied utterance apart altogether from his influence. Young, both in the *Night Thoughts*, and in the far more interesting and important *Conjectures on Original Composition;* Thomson in the *Seasons;* Macpherson in his Ossianic poems; Richardson and Sterne, — are among the most conspicuous of those who anticipated or independently expressed certain of his ideas and much of his attitude towards life. To pursue this subject further would carry us beyond the proper limits of our present theme; but enough has, I think, been said to expose the error of treating Rousseau as if he stood altogether alone. Others were filled with his spirit, and had their faces turned in the same direction, for his great work was only part of a mighty general movement which had already set in during the period of enlightenment itself, and which constantly increased in depth and rapidity as the eighteenth century ran its course. But it is not therefore to be assumed that the significance of Rousseau's own position is in any degree minimised. His place as leader remains unchallenged. I have already referred to Buffon's emphatic testimony to Rousseau's peculiar power of appeal. "But you yourself proved before Jean Jacques the duty of mothers to nurse their own children," some one is reported to have said to the famous naturalist. "Yes," was the reply, "we all proved it—but Jean Jacques only commands and is obeyed." However much his predecessors and contemporaries had preached and prophesied, he alone had the mysterious faculty of arousing a universal feeling

"of admiration, and, in a sense, of terror."[1] He was not, then, the solitary exponent of the new ideals; but he was far and away the most powerful and influential of all the exponents of them. Others, beside himself, helped in the spread of theories which were shown in the sequel to be instinct with revolutionary potencies; but their labours seem slight and ineffective compared with his own. He, more than any other, made the world conscious of greater possibilities of life, and fired it with the enthusiasm necessary for at least an effort towards their realisation. And thus the whole movement which had "Back to Nature" as its watchword is rightly linked with his name.

And now, what were the personal qualities of his work which enabled Rousseau to secure and retain the attention of those to whom he made his appeal—to arouse their admiration and terror? Undoubtedly, his extraordinary audacity and recklessness of statement had not a little to do with his early sensational successes. People like to be startled; and Rousseau startled his readers even when he did nothing else. His paradoxes were at least amusing, and fashionable society found a certain fresh kind of excitement in his vehement attacks upon its most cherished traditions. But while we note this fact, we must not lay too much emphasis upon it. Far more important was his wonderful power of language. Rousseau had pre-eminently the magic gift of style, and he wielded words with all the skill and effect of a practised master of oratory,[2]

[1] Garat, *Mémoires sur Suard*, i. 164.

[2] Reference should be made to the fact that in style, as in other matters, Rousseau was an innovator. French prose, when he first took up the pen, was facile, crisp, incisive, clear,—instance any page of

who can sway at his will, to varying emotions, the multitude before him. He was, indeed, essentially the orator, whose address to the reason was always made magnetic by the passion with which his arguments were charged. We are habitually, I suspect, inclined to underestimate the weight and authority often given to the leaders of men by their mere command of words. Here is a case which may well lead us to reconsider our opinion. But the ultimate secret of Rousseau's influence has not yet been reached. It depended at bottom upon just one quality—his absolute sincerity. Men knew—for about this there was no possibility of mistake—that, as Lessing said, he was no "venal sophist";[1] that there was for him a living thought beneath his wildest paradoxes; that his splendid eloquence was only the expression of profound earnestness of feeling. It was in reality this which made him the mighty power he was. Personal conviction, and the emotion bred of such conviction, are always contagious. It was by the strength of such conviction and emotion that Rousseau entered as a vitalising force into the spiritual life of his age.

To trace in detail the influence of Rousseau upon the writers and thinkers who themselves were leaders in the second half of the eighteenth and the early years of the nineteenth centuries, would require, not a few paragraphs in a brief chapter, but a volume to itself. It must suffice here to record the names of the more

Voltaire's. He abandoned the classic principle of sentence-structure, and introduced the long, sweeping rhythm, the extended balanced periods, the colour and the music, afterwards characteristic of the whole romantic school.

[1] *Sämmtliche Schriften*, v. 57.

important of those who to a greater or smaller extent were under his spell; for such a list, however incomplete and inadequate, will at least serve to indicate the amazingly seminal character of his teaching. In philosophy, as might perhaps have been expected, his direct power was felt most strongly in Germany, where, as Falckenberg says, his "emphatic summons" to a more spiritual view of life than that current in the age of enlightenment, "aroused a loud and lasting echo" in the hearts of two great men in particular—Kant and Fichte.[1] Upon Kant, as we have noted, *Émile* made a profound impression; to finish this book, he is even known to have abandoned, on one occasion, his invariable afternoon walk; its author's portrait was the only one that adorned his plain little Königsberg study. Fichte's postulate, in his *Grundzüge des gegenwartigen Zeitalters*, of a primitive state of innocence and instinctive righteousness — the starting-point of his whole scheme of human evolution—clearly owes much to Rousseau, whose characteristic note, moreover, is heard again and again in his social and political discussions. But it is rather in the field of literature than in that of philosophy proper, that Rousseau's ascendancy is everywhere to be marked. Here his rôle was indeed a European one. In France itself, we reckon Bernardin de Saint Pierre, Chateaubriand and Sénancour, Madame de Staël and George Sand, among the more famous of his immediate disciples; while his impress will readily be detected in many a page of Lamartine and De Vigny, of Alfred de Musset and Victor Hugo. In Italy, Ugo Foscolo produced his *Jacopo Ortis* in imitation of *Werther*, which is equiva-

[1] *History of Modern Philosophy* (English trans.), p. 265.

lent to saying that it was one of the innumerable progeny of the *Nouvelle Héloïse;* we know, too, that Rousseau's romance itself was one of his favourite books.[1] In Germany, where, as Hettner justly says, Rousseau's impulse was greater than even in France, he deeply touched writers of widely different trainings, objects, and ideals. Lessing never spoke of him without "secret respect." Herder in earlier life looked up to him as guide and friend, and retained much of his youthful enthusiasm to the end. The whole Storm-and-Stress movement—which Gervinus succinctly describes as a revolt of Nature against civilisation, simplicity against convention, the heart against the brain, liberty against tyranny—may be largely traced back to his stimulus and example, though here, of course, the powerful agency of English literature must not be overlooked. It may safely be said, at any rate, that all the leaders of that movement were devoted students of his writings. Klinger, who opened the way, and whose drama, *Sturm und Drang*, gave its name to the entire upheaval, took *Émile* as his "chief text-book."[2] Goethe, though no "blind worshipper," held Rousseau, for many years, in "high regard,"[3] and makes special reference to the "universal influence over the whole cultivated world" exerted by the treatise on education;[4] while *Werther* — fertile parent of dozens of sentimental domestic novels—was itself the offspring of the *Nouvelle Héloïse.* By his

[1] *Notizia bibliographica intorno alle Ultime Lettere*, in *Opere*, i. 179 *et seq.*

[2] Goethe, *Autobiography* (English trans.), ii. 6.

[3] Letter of Kestner, in Lewes, *Life of Goethe*, p. 115.

[4] *Autobiography*, ii. 6.

enthusiastic study of this same work, Schiller too was inspired to the production of *Die Raüber* and *Fiesco*, and his verses on Rousseau's tomb express his reverence for the memory of the modern Socrates who was persecuted for his effort to "make Christians into men." In England — though here it would be injudicious to venture upon too definite a statement, on account of the spontaneous rise and spread in this country of much of Rousseau's spirit and many of his ideas—he must still be accounted a literary force of considerable power. Gray, while attaching but little value to his works as a whole, and particularly slighting *Julie*, recognised the epoch-making character of *Émile*.[1] Beattie made a long and careful study of Rousseau;[2] Henry Mackenzie, "the Man of Feeling," clearly accepted him as one of his masters. Though hardly by direct contact, yet indirectly through the agency of those new elements with which, as we have said, he charged the emotional atmosphere of the time, he must to some extent have affected Goldsmith, Cowper, and Burns;[3] while there can be no doubt

[1] Letter to Wharton, in *Works* (ed. Gosse), iii. 151, 152.

[2] *Essay on Truth;* Forbes, *Life of Beattie*, i. 56, 108, 240.

[3] For Goldsmith's Rousseauism, see particularly the attack upon luxury in *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village*. Cowper was, of course, independent of Rousseau, and the many striking coincidences in the teachings of the two men must not tempt us to assume any direct connection between them. Yet the English poet, if he had not read the Genevan's work, evidently knew in general what he and his philosophy stood for. See the passage in *The Task* (bk. v.), on the impossibility of finding true liberty, except in grace; and the playful allusion in *Pairing Time Anticipated*. Burns, while he may have known little of Rousseau directly, drank deep of Thomson, Sterne, the Ossianic poems, and *The Man of Feeling*, prizing the last-named book "next to the Bible." See *Prose Works* (1819), pp. 13 and 182.

whatever about his immediate and immense influence upon Byron, who hailed him as an apostle of Nature,[1] and Shelley, who spoke of *Julie* as a masterpiece of "sublimest genius and more than human sensibility."[2] To this list we should almost be tempted to add the name of the poet of *The Prelude*, but that we know that, however great the parellelisms between his thought and Rousseau's,—in the central doctrine of each, for example, that Nature is good, and in their common hatred of cities and their luxury,—Wordsworth's philosophy was original and not derivative. Finally, from a great English teacher of more recent times comes a perhaps unexpected personal testimony to the continuance of Rousseau's stimulating power. His genius, George Eliot declared, "sent that electric thrill through my intellectual and moral frame" which "awakened me to new perceptions," and "made man and nature a fresh world of thought and feeling to me."[3]

It will thus be seen that Rousseau was one of the supreme masters of the romantic movement which reached its height in the opening years of the nineteenth century. He has indeed been more than once described as the real author of it. But this, of course,

[1] *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, bk. iii. stanzas 99 *et seq.* Byron's letters contain many references to Rousseau—often highly eulogistic.

[2] Dowden, *Life of Shelley* (1 vol. ed.), p. 312. Reference may also be made to the praise given to Rousseau (*à propos* of Gray's disparagement of the *Nouvelle Héloïse*) by Landor in his *De cultu Latini Sermonis*.

[3] J. W. Cross, *Life of George Eliot*, i. 160. George Eliot adds that Rousseau affected her so strongly, not by teaching her "any new belief," but simply because "the mighty rushing wind of his inspiration has so quickened my faculties that I have been able to shape more definitely for myself ideas which had previously dwelt as dim *Ahnungen* in my soul." This exactly indicates the nature of much of his influence on the world at large.

is altogether too sweeping an assertion. What we know as romanticism was not, as we are often apt to imagine, a simple historic growth out of certain easily specified conditions, but an extremely complex phenomenon into which many conflicting factors entered. The love of Nature, the return to simplicity, the assertion of individuality, the temper of revolt, and the high-pitched emotionalism, which were among the most conspicuous of its aspects, are of course in large measure to be connected with Rousseau's teachings; but the neo-mediævalism which was from the first so prominent in the entire reaction against classicism as to lead Heine and Madame de Staël (among others) to regard romanticism and the Gothic revival as synonymous and co-extensive, is not only not to be found in his work, but was wholly alien to his spirit, and to the foundation principles of his thought.[1] But while, therefore, we cannot speak of him, or indeed of any single individual, as the father of romanticism as a whole, he may at least be considered as immediately responsible for a very important element in it—its extraordinary subjectivity. It is no exaggeration to say that he discovered and made popular that *culte du moi* which dominated literature for many decades after his death, and has never since been abandoned; that to him we owe in the main the overthrow of the objective principles of the classic school, and the substitution therefor of the particular and the personal. The literature of intimate self-delineation—of inner experience, and the analysis of individual thoughts, motives, and feelings—really took its rise in the first

[1] Note, *e.g.*, his disparagement of Gothic art in his *Lettre sur la Musique Française.*

great modern example of autopsychography, — the *Confessions*, which more than any other one work stimulated the lyric quality—the mania for self-expression,—which was so marked a characteristic of romanticism in all its varied developments.[1]

But while the effect of Rousseau's writings on literature, and the reflection of life in literature, deserves the closest attention, the most important manifestation of his influence for the general student is to be sought in the sphere of politics. In France, from the middle of the eighteenth century onward, the rapidly increasing interest of serious-minded people, and even of the fashionable world, in the first principles of government, was shown by the books which enjoyed the widest circulation, and the subjects which were most popular in the conversations of the *salons;* and the inevitable tendency of the whole movement of thought, as we can now see clearly enough, was to shake the foundations of the existing *régime.* Within a few years after Rousseau's death opened that tempestuous era of upheaval and experiment in which, to use Louis Blanc's vivid phrase, ideas were translated into acts, books into combats, philosophers into gladiators—in which, in a word, the theories of the closet were carried out into the world of practical affairs. With that era, for good or evil, the name of Rousseau is now indissolubly connected. Without going so far as to say, with Napoleon, that but for him France would have had no Revolution,[2]—for the study of French social and

[1] Reference must here be made to the powerful co-operating influence of Sterne. But this is a matter which—as we are not now writing the history of romanticism—cannot be discussed.

[2] Holland, *Foreign Reminiscences* (2nd ed.), p. 259.

political conditions before 1789 should, I think, convince us that the direct influence of the so-called intellectual forerunners of the great convulsion is frequently overstated,—it is none the less beyond controversy that he counted immensely as a revolutionary power. Without reference to him, no record of the forces behind the Revolution would be complete.

He himself, like Edmund Burke, had prescience enough to realise that the world was on the eve of a tremendous cataclysm. In a passage which has become justly famous by reason of its singularly prophetic character, he once wrote: "We are approaching a crisis and a century of revolutions"; and added in a footnote: "I hold it impossible for the great monarchies of Europe to last much longer."[1] We can now see in what ways he helped to hasten the change which he thus foretold. But it must never be forgotten that he did not himself desire it. This is a point which has already been touched upon, but it is so important that, even at the risk of some repetition, it has to be re-emphasised. Rousseau was theoretically no revolutionist; he did his utmost, according to his lights, to correct the abuses by which the very existence of society was imperilled, and, had he lived to witness the events which followed the fall of the Bastille, he might even have taken the ground that the crash could have been averted had the world given heed to his warnings. Moreover, his oft-reiterated doctrine of the sanctity of the individual must necessarily have led him to scout that catchword of "public safety" with which the extremists sought to justify their wildest excesses, while his instinctive

[1] *Émile*, livre iii.

hatred of violence and bloodshed would have caused him to recoil with horror from the excesses themselves.[1] Thus we may admit a measure of truth, both in George Sand's contention, already quoted, that the *Contrat Social* was no more responsible for the brutalities of the Revolution than was the Gospel for the massacre of St. Bartholomew, and in the German witticism that the Jacobins were certainly not "Jean-Jacobins." The *Contrat Social*, as Mr. Lecky says, "is in truth utterly condemnatory of the proceedings of the French Revolutionists, for one of its fundamental doctrines is, that it is essential to every act of sovereignty that it should be submitted to the free and unintimidated vote of the entire community."[2]

But in the irony of human affairs, it often happens that the effect of a man's teaching is totally at variance with his own spirit and intentions, and even with the manifest principles of that teaching itself; and while Rousseau would probably have been astonished and disgusted by the conduct of those who proclaimed themselves his followers, his immense power over them, and their faith in him as *director directorum*, remain among the simple facts of history. During the reign of Louis XVI. and throughout the entire earlier period of the Revolution, veneration for his memory was almost unbounded, and he was popularly idolised as the typical friend of virtue and liberty—the writer who

[1] "Public safety is nothing if all the individuals are not safe," he wrote, in his *Réfutation d'Helvétius*. And in his article on political economy in the *Encyclopédie*, he denounced the theory that government has the right to sacrifice an innocent man for the safety of the multitude, as false, pernicious, and absolutely opposed to the fundamental laws of society.

[2] *History of England*, v. 364.

beyond all others had shown himself the enemy of tyrants and the advocate of the people. The result was the development of a regular Rousseau cult. His portrait was conspicuous in public exhibitions; statues were erected to him; a street in Paris, in which he had lived for nearly eight years, was re-christened by his name; on the 20 vendémiaire, an III., a splendid fête was held in his honour, and the remains of "the man of Nature and truth" were borne in triumph to the Panthéon. And while he thus entered everywhere into the imagination of the Revolution, he directly and profoundly influenced those who were mainly responsible for its destinies. He himself had taken pains to qualify his doctrine of the omnipotence for the sovereign people. His disciples took the doctrine, stripped it of the qualifications, and made it the corner-stone of their paper constitutions. As early as 1788, as we have seen, Mallet du Pan heard Marat reading and commenting upon the *Contrat Social* in a public promenade, and amid the applause of an enthusiastic audience, and he adds to his record of the incident, that he would find difficulty in "mentioning a single Revolutionist who was not transported by these anarchistic theories, and did not burn with desire to realise them."[1] Robespierre, in particular, took Rousseau as his guide in politics, and deliberately fashioned his style upon the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, which

[1] *Mercure Britannique*, ii. 362. Compare the emphatic testimony of Burke: "Everybody knows that there is a great dispute amongst their leaders, which of them is the best resemblance to Rousseau. In truth, they all resemble him. . . . Him they study; him they meditate; him they turn over in all the time they can spare from the laborious mischief of the day, or the debauches of the night. Rousseau is their canon of holy writ; . . . he is their standard figure of perfection. To

he always kept on a table beside him. The debates in the assemblies are full of references to, and echoes from, the master's writings. His doctrines furnished the basis of the Jacobins' effort to reconstruct society; and the ground-plan of both those great features of their programme—the scheme of State religion and that of public education—is to be found in *Émile*.[1]

In the later years of the Revolution, and during the reaction which followed, Rousseau's influence naturally waned. But that in more recent days his memory is still cherished in the popular heart of France as that of one of the great makers of modern democracy, is conclusively proved by the erection of the statue in the Place du Panthéon during the centenary celebrations of 1889, and by the character of the speeches delivered on that occasion.[2]

In the foregoing pages I have sought to define Rousseau's place as epoch-maker, and to trace in broad

this man and this writer, as a pattern to authors and to Frenchmen, the foundries of Paris are now running for statues, with the kettles of their poor, and the bells of their churches" (*Letter to a Member of the National Assembly* (1791), pp. 31, 32).

[1] See *ante*, pp. 151, 152, for reference to the question of Rousseau's possible influence over the minds of the founders of the American constitution. Considering the whole tendency of the eighteenth century, the metaphysical phraseology so frequently employed by the framers of "Articles," "Bills," and "Declarations," need not, however, by any means, be traced back immediately to him. It should at least be remembered that the United States, and not France, led the way in the establishment of a political system upon the doctrine of the "inalienable rights" of man; and that the prestige which the doctrine thus gained, added much to its practical power and influence during the early revolutionary period in France.

[2] For which, see *Rousseau jugé par les français d'aujourd'hui* (ed. J. Grand-Carteret), pp. 543–569.

outline his personal relationship with the principles and ideals of the great age of revolution in politics and romanticism in letters. One closing remark is naturally suggested by our survey. Brief and incomplete as this has been, it should none the less serve to establish the truth of Sir Henry Maine's statement, that "we have never seen in our generation—indeed, the world has not seen more than once or twice in all the course of history—a literature which has exercised such prodigious influence over the minds of men as that which emanated from Rousseau between 1749 and 1762."[1] Yet, when we compare the literature with the influence—the cause with the effect—we are bound to confess that the one seems out of all proportion to the other. That Rousseau was a man of extraordinary genius, we do not seek to deny; but we may say of him, as some one said of Victor Hugo, that if he had genius, that was all he had. He was not a systematic thinker; his treatment of life was narrow and one-sided; his philosophy was full of paradoxes and inconsistencies; his teachings seem, from the point of view of the present day, a strange compound of the fantastic and the commonplace, the impossible and the obvious; in the whole body of his voluminous work there is nothing which for a moment we should be justified in ranking among those abiding things of literature which are independent of all fluctuations of theory and taste. His case, then, is a very striking instance of the general truth, which is familiar to every historian, and upon which we ourselves have insisted, that the ascendency of any great leader in thought, can be understood only when he is

[1] *Ancient Law*, p. 87.

placed in his environment, and studied in connection with the whole culture and tendencies of his time. Explain him how we may, however, Rousseau's claim upon us is incontestable. He was, as Amiel said, an "ancestor in all things." Nor is our interest in him historic only. While we may regard him primarily as a motive-force in a period of rapid and widespread change which has now closed, we must remember that we of to-day are still living in the midst of great intellectual and social movements, which he did much to inspire. Vastly as their form has altered, their power is by no means spent.

INDEX

À tout français aimant encore la justice et la vérité, 108.
Académie des Sciences, Paris, 40.
Addison, J., 176, note 3. See also *Spectator*.
Alembert, J. le R. d', 54, 125; Rousseau's letter to, on the theatre. See *Lettre sur les Spectacles*.
American constitution, 151, 152, 250, note 1.
Amiel, H. F., quoted, 252.
Anet, Claude, 31, 32.
Anglomania in France, 162.
Aristocracy, as form of government, Rousseau on, 142.
Arlequin Sauvage, Delisle's, 237.
Arnold, Matthew, 220.
Atala, Chateaubriand's, 165.
Athanasius Paulus, 27.
Aubonne, M. d', 22.
Aufklärung. See Enlightenment.
Automathes, Kirkby's, 190, note 2.
Autonous, Story of, 190, note 2.

Basedow, J. B., 206.
Beattie, J., 243.
Beaumont, C. de, Archbishop of Paris, condemns *Émile*, 92; Rousseau's reply to, 92, 209 note, 217–219.
Bellegarde, Mdlle. de. See Houdetot, Comtesse d'.
Benzenval, Madame de, 41, 42, 46.
Bernard, Gabriel, 7, 8.
Berne, Canton de, Rousseau banished from, 89, 96.
Bible, The, Rousseau and, 216, 223.
Blanc, L., quoted, 246.
Bossey, Rousseau at, 8.
Bossuet, J. B., 148.
Boswell, J., 92 note, 99.
Bourgeois movement in literature, 162, 163, 165, 172.
Bourgoin, Rousseau at, 104.
Broglie, Madame de, 41, 42.
Buffon, G. L. L., 129, 204, 237.
Burke, E., 247; quoted, 249 note.
Burlamaqui, J. J., 146 note.
Burns, R., 243.
Buttafuoco, M., 92.
Byron, Lord, 175, 244.

Candide, Voltaire's, 71, 72.
Carlyle, T., quoted, 69, 90.
Caro, E. M., quoted, 112.
Castel, C. I. See Saint-Pierre, Abbé de.
Castel, Père, 41, 46.
Caylus, Comte de, 39.
Chambéry, Rousseau at, 30 *et seq.*
Chateaubriand, F. A., 165, 175, 241.
Chenouceaux, Madame de, 54.
Childhood, rights of, Rousseau on, 185.
Christianity, Rousseau on, 221 note. See also *Bible* and Religion.

Civilisation, Rousseau on, 129, 226, 229, 230, 237. See also Nature.
Clarissa Harlowe, Richardson's, 153, 161, 163, 164.
Clarke, S., 224.
Compayré, G., quoted, 180 note, 199.
Concise Account of the Dispute between Hume and Rousseau, 99, 102.
Condillac, Abbé de, 55, 188.
Condillac, E. B. de, 190 note.
Confessions, Les, projected, 86 note; work on, 102, 104; Rousseau's readings from, 106, 107; influence of, on literature, 245, 246; documentary value of, *Preface*, pp. vii, viii; quoted *passim*.
Considérations sur le gouvernement de Pologne, 108.
Conti, Prince de, 97, 104.
Contrat Social, Le, published, 85; analysed, 138–145; sources of theories of, 145, 146; influence of, 149–152, 248–250.
Corday, Charlotte, 233, note 1.
Corinne, Madame de Staël's, 165.
Cottin, Madame de, 233, note 1.
Country, the, Rousseau's love of, 175–178; stimulates taste for, 233.
Cowper, W., 243; quoted, 230.
Crébillon, C. P. J. de, 166.
"Culte du moi," Rousseau's influence upon the, 245.

Davenport, Mr., of Wootton, 99, 103.
Declaration of Independence, 151, 152, 250, note 1.
Découverte du Nouveau Monde, La, 116.
Deffand, Madame du, 138, 166.
Defoe, D., 158, 163, 176, 236.
Delisle, L. F., 129, 237.
Delphine, Madame de Staël's, 165.
Democracy as form of government, Rousseau on, 142.
Descartes, R., 224.
Devin du Village, Le, 116; success of, 58; proceeds of, 64; performed in Rousseau's honour at Strasbourg, 97.
Diable Boiteux, Le Sage's, 236.
Dictionnaire de Musique, 67, 91, 104, 105.
Diderot, D., 55, 56, 60, 62, 65, 79–83, 139, 209; his *Lettre sur les Aveugles*, 55; *Le Fils Naturel*, 80; *De la poésie dramatique*, 80 note.
Dijon, Académie de, questions proposed by, 55, 60.
Discours sur les Sciences et les Arts, conception of, 55; crowned by the Académie de Dijon, 57; success of, 57–59; analysed, 117–121.
Discours sur l'Inégalité, written, 60; analysed, 133–137; cited, 128.
Drama. See Stage.
Drama bourgeois, 80 note, 163, 172.
Duclos, C. P., 166.
Ducommun, A., 10, 11.
Duelling, 174.
Dupin, Madame, 41, 42, 54, 57.

Ecclesiastical Polity, Hooker's, 146, note 1.
Éclaircissement, age of. See Enlightenment.
Education, Rousseau on, 173, note 2. See also *Émile*.
Eliot, George, 244; quoted, 75, note 1.
Élysée, Julie's, 177, 178.
Émile, projected, 67; published, 85; condemned by the Archbishop of Paris, 92; burnt, 89; purpose of, 202; analysed, 181–198; criticism of, 198–208; place among Rousseau's works, 180, 181; Rousseau's indebtedness to other educationalists in the writing of, 204; historic importance, 204, 205; influence, 205, 206, 250; quoted or referred to, 130, 228, 241, 242, 243, 247.

Émile et Sophie, 198 note.
Encyclopédie, L', 55; Rousseau contributes to, 55.
Engagement téméraire, L', 116.
England, Rousseau in, 98–103.
English gardens, 177.
English writers, influence in Germany, 242.
Enlightenment, age of, characterised, 232, 233.
Épinay, Madame d', 54, 62, 63, 74, 78, 79, 82, 83, 107, 207, 208, 233, note 1.
Equality and inequality, Rousseau on, 133–139.
Erdmann, J. E., 204, note 2; quoted, 234 note.
Ermenonville, Rousseau at, 109; burial at, 110.
Essay on Criticism, Pope's, 227, note 1.
Essay on Man, Pope's, 68.
Exposé succinct de la contestation entre Hume et Rousseau, 99, 102.

Falckenberg, R., quoted, 241.
Fénelon, F. de S. de la M., 204, 224.
Fichte, E. H., 241.
Fiesco, Schiller's, 243.
Filmer, R., 146, note 1.
Fils Naturel, Diderot's, 80.
Fontenelle, B. le B. de, 39.
Foscolo, U., 241, 242.
Francueil, Madame de, 51, 52.
Francueil, M. de, 42, 54, 57, 82.
Frederick the Great, 90, 95, 97.
Froebel, F., 206.

Gaïme, Abbé, 18.
Gardening, English, 177 note; in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, 177, 178.
Gâtier, M., 22.
Gay, J., 236.
Geneva, proposal to establish theatre at, 125, 127; influence of early life at, upon Rousseau, 147, 233; his visit to, 60, 61; Council of, restores him to civic rights, 61; he dedicates his *Discours sur l'Inégalité* to, 61; offer of city librarianship declined, 62; refuses to admit Rousseau, 89; orders burning of *Émile*, 89; orders seizure of *Lettre à Beaumont*, 93; Rousseau renounces citizenship, 93.
George III., 98, 101, 106.
Germany, Rousseau's influence in, 241–243.
Gervinus, G. G., quoted, 242.
Gessner, S., 88.
Girardin, Marquis de, 109.
Goethe, J. W. von, 69, 165, 236, 242.
Goldsmith, O., 243.
Gonceru, Madame, 1, 4.
Gothic revival, 245.
Gouvon, Abbé de, 17, 18.
Gouvon, Comte de, 17, 18.
Government, Rousseau on, 141, 143. See also *Contrat Social*.
Gray, T., 176, 177 note, 243.
Great man theory of history, 237.
Grimm, F. M., 54, 60, 62, 65, 81, 107.
Grotius, H., 146 note.
Gulliver's Travels, Swift's, 236.

Heine, H., 245.
Henriade, La, Voltaire's, 21.
Herbart, J. F., 206.
Herder, J. G. von, 242.
Hermitage, the, Rousseau at, 64, 83.
History, Rousseau on, 134, 187, 192.
Hobbes, T., 129, 145, 146 note.
Höffding, H., quoted, 227, note 2.
Holbach, Baron d', 54; probable original of Wolmar, 165, note 1.
Holmes, O. W., quoted, 230.
Hooker, R., 146, note 1.
Houdetot, Comtesse d', 54, 74 *et seq.*, 233, note 1.
Hugo, V., 241, 251.
Hume, D., 98–103; quoted, 113, 114.

Inequality, Rousseau on, 133–139.
Iphis, 116.

Jacobins, 150, 248, 250.
Jacopo Ortis, Foscolo's, 241.
Johnson, S., 72 note, 98; quoted, 111.
Julie. See *Nouvelle Héloïse*.

Kant, I., 206, 241.
Keith, Marshal, 90, 92 note, 95.
Kirkby, J., 190, note 1.
Klinger, F. M., 242.

La Bruyère, J. de, 21.
Lamartine, M. L. A. P. de, 241.
Lambercier, M. and Mdlle., 8, 9.
Landor, W. S., quoted, 244, note 2.
Landscape in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, 174, 175.
Lecky, W. E. H., quoted, 148, 149, 151, 248.
Leibnitz, G. W., 224.
Le Sage, A. R., 236.
Les Charmettes, Rousseau's life at, 33–35.
Lessing, G. E., 242; quoted, 240.
Letters, method of conducting story by means of, 167 note.
Lettre à l'Archevêque de Paris, 92; analysed, 217–219.
Lettre sur la Musique Française, 60, 245, note.
Lettre sur la Providence, 70.
Lettre sur les Spectacles, written, 84; analysed, 125–128; referred to, 163, note 1, 171.
Lettres écrites de la Campagne, Tronchin's, 93.
Lettres écrites de la Montagne, 93, 94, 219, 220.
Lettres persanes, Montesquieu's, 236.
Le Vasseur, family of, 46–49, 54, 59, 83.
Le Vasseur, Thérèse, 46–48, 65, 66, 87, 96, 97, 99, 100, 104, 109 note.
Lévite d'Ephraïm, Le, 88, 116.
Lillo, G., 163.
Lisbon, earthquake at, 68 *et seq.*, 84 note.
Locke, J., 129, 145, 146 note, 185, 190 note, 194, 204.
Louis XV., 58.
Lucrèce, 116.
Luxembourg, Madame de, 87.
Luxembourg, Maréchal de, 50, 85.

Mably, M. de, 37, 38.
Mackenzie, H., 243.
Macpherson, J., 176, 238, 243, note 3.
Maine, Sir H., quoted, 145 note, 251.
Malesherbes, C. G. de, 85; Rousseau's letters to. See *Quatre Lettres*.
Mallet du Pan, J., quoted, 149, 150, 249.
Manual labour, Rousseau on, 189, 190.
Marat, J. P., 149, 150.
Marivaux, P. C. de C. de, 41, 166.
Maudsley, Dr. H., quoted, 112, 114, note 3.
Mediævalism in the romantic movement, 245.
Merceret, Mdlle., 23, 24.
Mirabeau, Marquis de, 104.
Miracles, Rousseau on, 93, 215, 217, 219.
Misanthrope, Le, Molière's, 127.
Molière, J. B. P., 126, 127.
Monarchy, Rousseau on, 142.
Monquin, Rousseau at, 104, 105.
Montaigne, M. E. de, 204.
Montaigu, Comte de, 42–45.
Montesquieu, C. de S. de, 147, 236.
Mont-Louis, Rousseau at, 83–87.
Moral training, Rousseau on, 185, 186, 190–193.
Morale Sensitive, La, 67.
Morelly, 146, note 1, 237.
Morley, J., quoted, 206, 231.
Mothers, Rousseau's appeal to, 183.
Môtiers, Rousseau at, 91–95.

Muses galantes, Les, 53, 116.
Music, Rousseau's passion for, 4; his study of, 22, 23; teaches, 25, 33; quarrel between French and Italian schools of, 60, 81; Rousseau's new system of notation in, 39, 40.
Musset, A. de, 241.

Napoleon on Rousseau, 246.
Narcisse, 116; written, 39; performed, 58; preface to, analysed, 123–125.
Natural religion. See Religion.
Nature, Rousseau's love of, 8, 174–178; his interpretation of, 233; theory of, in his thought, analysed, 226–229; return to, 168, 228–230; in education, 201–204; life of, 157; state of, 129, 130, 133–135, 139, 146 note, 147, 173.
Necker, Madame, 206.
Neufchâtel, principality of, Rousseau's stay in, 90, 91.
Nicolaz, M., 22, 23.
Nouvelle Héloïse, La, conception of, 72, 73; work on, 74; published, 85; success of, 85; analysed, 153–161; historic significance of, 162–167; ethical purpose of, 167–174; nature in, 174–178; influence of, 179; quoted or referred to, 200 note, 208, 228, 242, 243, 244.

Opera, the, Rousseau on, 172.
Ossian, 176, 238, 243, note 3.

Pamela, Richardson's, 183 note.
Paoli, P., 92.
Paris, Rousseau's first visit to, 28, 29; second visit, 39; excitement caused by his stay in, 97, 98; return to, 1770, and life there, 105, 106; his hatred of, 62, 65, 130, 169–171.
Paris, Archbishop of. See Beaumont, C. de, and *Lettre à l'Archevêque de Paris*.
Pascal, B., 136 note, 188.
Paul et Virginie, Saint Pierre's, 165.
Peasantry, French, condition of, 29, 30.
Pestalozzi, J. H., 206.
Pilgrim Fathers, their compact, 145 note.
Plutarch, 6.
Poland. See *Considérations sur le gouvernement de Pologne*.
Pollock, Sir F., quoted, 147, note.
Pontverre, M. de, 12, 13.
Pope, A., 68, 70, 227, note 1.
Prévost, A. F., 164.
Princesse de Navarre, Voltaire's, 53.
Prisonniers de Guerre, Les, 116.
Profession de foi d'un Vicaire Savoyard, 86, 193, note 2, 228; analysed, 210–217.
Projet de Constitution pour les Corses, 92.
Property, Rousseau on, 135–137.
Prose, French, 239, note 2.
Puffendorff, S., 21, 146 note.
Pygmalion, 116.

Quatre Lettres à Malesherbes, 85, 86.
Querelle des Buffons, La, 60, 81.
Quick, R. H., quoted, 204.
Quinet, E., quoted, 110.

Rabelais, F., 204.
Rameau, J. P., 54, 55.
Rasselas, Johnson's, 72 note.
Raüber, Die, Schiller's, 243.
Reine fantasque, La, 116.
Religion, Rousseau on, 190–193, 207–225.
Religion, State, Rousseau on, 143, 144, 161.
Religious experiences, Rousseau's, 35, 36, 208, 209.
Réponse à Stanislas, 121–123.
Restif de la Bretonne, N. E., 168 note.
Revelation, Rousseau on, 215, 216.
Rêveries d'un Promeneur Solitaire,

108; cited or referred to, 52, 53, 59, 96 note.
Revolution, French, Rousseau and the, 148–151, 246–250.
Richardson, S., 153, 162, 164, 166, 167 note, 183.
Richelieu, Cardinal, 53.
Robespierre, A. B. J. de, 150, 249.
Robinson Crusoe, Defoe's, 158, 163, 189, 193, note 1, 236.
Roland, Madame, 233, note 1.
Romances read by Rousseau, 5, 6 note.
Romanticism, 245.
Roquin, M., 88, 89.
Rousseau, Aunt, 1, 4.
Rousseau, François, 3, 7.
Rousseau, Isaac, 2, 3, 5–7, 15, 24, 45.
ROUSSEAU, J. J., birth, 1; parents, 2–7; education, 3–9; apprenticeship, 10; flight from Geneva, 11; relations with Madame de Warens, 13, 14, 19–38, 54, 60, 61, 233, note 1; at Turin, 15–18; life at Annecy, 20 *et seq.*; sent to Lazarist Seminary, 22; studies music, 22, 23; wanderings, 23–25; teaches music, 25, 33; secretary to Athanasius Paulus, 27; first visit to Paris, 28, 29; entertained by a peasant, 29, 30; at Chambéry, 30 *et seq.*; falls ill, 33, 35, 36; at Les Charmettes, 33–35; religious experiences, 35, 36, 208, 209; at Montpelier, 36; teacher of M. de Mably's children, 37; second visit to Paris, 39; presents system of music notation to Academy, 40; idleness and fashionable society, 41, 42; in Venice as secretary to M. de Montaigu, 42–45; visits father, 45; returns to Paris, 46; meets Thérèse le Vasseur, 47; *liaison* with her, 47 *et seq.*; sends his children to the Foundling Hospital, 49–53; monetary difficulties, 53; meets Diderot and other prominent men, 54, 55; wins prize offered by Academy of Dijon for essay on Influence of the Sciences and Arts, 55–57; social successes, 57; undertakes reform of dress, 59; writes *Lettre sur la Musique Française* and *Discours sur l'Inégalité*, 60; at Geneva, where he receives ovation, 61; returns to Protestantism, 61; grows distrustful of friends, 62; at the Hermitage, 63 *et seq.*; misunderstandings with Madame le Vasseur, 65, 66; projects of work, 67; collision with Voltaire over the Lisbon earthquake, 68–72; visionary extravagances, 72, 73; relations with Madame d'Houdetot and Madame d'Épinay, 74–79; quarrel with Diderot and Grimm, 79–83; at Mont-Louis, 83 *et seq.*; *Lettre sur les Spectacles*, 84; *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, *Le Contrat Social*, and *Émile*, 85; flight from France, 87; wanderings and persecutions, 88 *et seq.*; relations with Frederick the Great, 90, 91; further wanderings, 95–97; in England, 97–103; returns to France, 103; many changes of abode, 104; goes through form of marriage with Thérèse, 104; in Paris, 105 *et seq.*; readings from the Confessions, 107; carries MS. of *Rousseau Juge de Jean Jacques* to Notre-Dame, 107, 108; at Ermenonville, 109; last days, illness, and death, 109; burial, 110; analysis of his character, 110–115; the question of his mental condition, 113, 114; list of his works, 116; his attack upon science and art, 117–132; analysis of his essay on the influence of the arts and sciences, 117–121; of the reply to Stanislas, 121–123; of the preface to *Narcisse*, 123–125; of the *Lettre sur les Spectacles*, 125–128; political writings, 133–152; analysis

of the *Discours sur l'Inégalité*, 133–137; of the *Contrat Social*, 137–145; *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, 153–179; *Émile*, 180–206; religious writings, 207–225; analysis of the *Profession de foi*, 211–217; of the *Lettre à l'Archevêque de Paris*, 217–219; of the *Lettres de la Montagne*, 219–220; Rousseau as epoch-maker, 226–252; analysis of his teachings, 226 *et seq.*; reaction against the spirit of his age, 233–235; characteristics of his work, 239, 240; influence in Germany, France, Italy, and England, 240–244; connection with the romantic movement, 244–246; as forerunner of the revolution, 246–250; place in history, 250–252.
Rousseau, Suzanne, 1, 2.
Rousseau juge de Jean Jacques, 107, 108; quoted, 103, note.
Rousseauism before Rousseau, 237.

Saint Evremond, C. M. de S. D., 21.
Saint Lambert, J. F., 75 *et seq.*, 77, 78, 207, 208.
Saint Marc Girardin, quoted, 160.
Saint-Pierre, Abbé de, 67, 68, 204.
Saint Pierre, B. de, 106, 163, 175, 241.
Saint Pierre, island of, Rousseau's residence on, 95, 96.
Sand, George, 175, 233, note 1, 241; quoted, 151, 248.
Savoyard vicar. See Vicaire Savoyard and *Profession de foi*.
Schiller, J. C. F. von, 243.
Sciences, Rousseau's attack upon, 118–125; on the teaching of, 187, 188.
Sénancour, E. P. de, 241.
Sentimentalism, 26, 236.
Shelley, P. B., 175, 244.
Slavery, Rousseau on, 143 note.
Social Contrat. See *Contrat Social*.
Society, Rousseau's attack upon, 129–131, 201–203.
Sovereignty, Rousseau on, 140–143.
Sparta, Rousseau's admiration of, 125, 127, 143, 147, 233.
Spectator, The, 21, 185.
Spencer, H., 185, 206, note 1.
Staël, Madame de, 165, 241, 245.
Stage, the, Rousseau on, 126–128, 172.
Stanislas, King of Poland, 57, 121–123.
Stephen, Sir L., quoted, 167 note.
Sterne, L., 238, 246, note 1.
Strasbourg, Rousseau at, 97.
"Sturm-und-Drang" movement, 242.
Style, Rousseau's, 239.
Subjectivity of romantic literature, inspired by Rousseau, 245, 246.
Suicide, 91, 158.
Swaddling-clothes, Rousseau's denunciation of, 183.

Texte, J., quoted, 164, 178 note.
Theatre, the, Rousseau on, 126–128, 172.
Thomson, J., 75, note 1, 238.
Toleration, Rousseau on, 144, 145.
Tragedy, Bourgeois, 80 note.
Tronchin, Dr., 82.
Tronchin, procureur-général of Geneva, 93.
Turgot, A. R. J., 204.
Turin, Rousseau at, 15–18.

Val-de-Travers, Rousseau's residence in, 91–95.
Venice, Rousseau in, 43–45.
Vercellis, Comtesse de, 17.
Verger des Charmettes, Les, 34, note 2.
Vernes, M., 94.
Vernet, J., 220.
Vicaire Savoyard, originals of, 18, 22. See also *Profession de foi*.
Vigny, A. de, 241.
Voltaire, F. M. A. de, 54, 57, 69–72, 75, note 1, 84, 94, 103, 109, 129, note 1, 222, 225, 230, 234 note, 239, note 2.

Walpole, H., 101, 221.
Warens, Madame de, 13, 14, 19–38, 54, 60, 61, 233, note 1.
Werther, Goethe's, 165, 241, 242.
Wintzenried, R., 37.
Women, Rousseau on, 127, 128, 170–172; on the education of, 194–197; influence upon, 233, note 1.
Wootton, Rousseau at, 99–103.
Wordsworth, W., 175, 244.

Young, Arthur, 233, note 2.
Young, Edward, 238.
Yverdun, Rousseau at, 88, 89.

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